





INCARNATIONS *of* DEVOTION



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A Personal Foreword

The publication of this catalog served as a startling reminder to me, marking the one-year anniversary of first entering this twilight, almost surreal atmosphere, that we have grown accustomed to in “Pandemic Life”. It seems like it wasn’t too long ago that we thought this temporary shutdown would only be a week or two, and that we might even be able to re-open for the tail end of Asia Week, 2020.

Now here we are, releasing our catalog for Asia Week 2021, still in lockdown- but with multiple vaccines slowly rolling out to the public, an actual light at the end of the tunnel. An example to prove the interminable alimentionation of both Kapoor Galleries, and the Kapoor family’s stubbornness.

I would like to take this opportunity to send out a special thank you to my team at Kapoor Galleries, who made this catalog happen and offered me the motivation to subsist despite how dark things seemed at times: Laura Weinstein, Sophia Williamson, & Carly Johnson. Lastly, a more general thank you to all of our friends, clients, partners, naysayers, and those of you in between. You all know who you are.

You’ve helped motivate me more than you will ever know, especially the naysayers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sanjay Kapoor", with a stylized, flowing script.

Sanjay Kapoor

3.11.21



Introduction

Over the past year, many aspects of our normal lives have come to a standstill amidst this global pandemic. Although the art world has been forced to adapt to an increasingly virtual world, the perseverance and creativity that members of this community have exhibited in doing so is inspiring. It is comforting to know that no matter the circumstances, art and its appreciators will persist, and we look forward to when we can share these experiences in person again with one another.

Thus, it is with great pleasure and pride that we present Kapoor Galleries' 2021 catalog, *Incarnations of Devotion*. This catalog is a celebration of the gallery's forty-plus years of success as a family enterprise, and as such, is dedicated to the memory of Urmil Kapoor (1941-2018). Together with Ramesh Kapoor, she helped bring the field of Indian and Himalayan art to where it is today.

After India's partition in 1947, Ramesh left Pakistan along with his parents and migrated from Lahore to Jalandhar, India. There, the government allocated his father an empty store where he could establish his own business. After a thrift merchant offered him an entire private library, Ramesh's father started a rental library, catering to Indian refugees whose displacement left them with ample time to read. This led to the acquisition of illustrated books and manuscripts, which helped propel the Kapoor family into the field of the fine art of Indian miniature painting. When Ramesh finished college in 1958 and joined his father in business, the two worked together to establish relationships with museums and universities, supplying these institutions with coveted masterworks. Ramesh and Urmil married in 1967, and witnessing an increasing European and American interest in Indian Art, they immigrated to the United States and established Kapoor Galleries Inc. in New York City in 1975.

Since establishment, Kapoor Galleries Inc. has played an instrumental role in educating the public about the ancient and classical fine arts of India and the Himalayas while encouraging interest amongst both collectors and institutions. Ramesh Kapoor has guided some of the most significant public and private collections of the 20th century, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the San Diego Museum of Art, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Norton Simon Museum, the Minneapolis Institute of Art, the Detroit Institute of Art, the Dallas Museum of Art, and Ball State Museum.

We would also like to take this opportunity to extend our deepest gratitude to those who have lent their knowledge and support for this endeavor: **Ramesh & Urmil Kapoor, Dr. Pratapaditya Pal, Dr. Daniel Ehnbohm, Dr. Gursharan Sidhu, Dr. Gautama Vajracharya, Mitche Kunzman, Dr. Amin Jaffer, Jeff Watt, Dr. Amy Heller, Bob Del Bonta, Steve Kossak, Dr. Vidya and Jay Dehejia, Dr. Harsha Dehejia, Dr. John Guy, Pujan Gandhi, and Dr. Emma Stein.**

Enjoy this catalog, and we look forward to welcoming you to Kapoor Galleries!

Ganesha Enthroned

Guler, first generation after Nainsukh and Manaku, circa 1775-1780

Ink and opaque watercolor on paper

Image: 6 ⅜ x 9 ⅜ in. (16.2 x 23.8 cm.)

Folio: 8 x 11 ¼ in. (20.3 x 28.6 cm.)

Provenance:

Private New York collection.

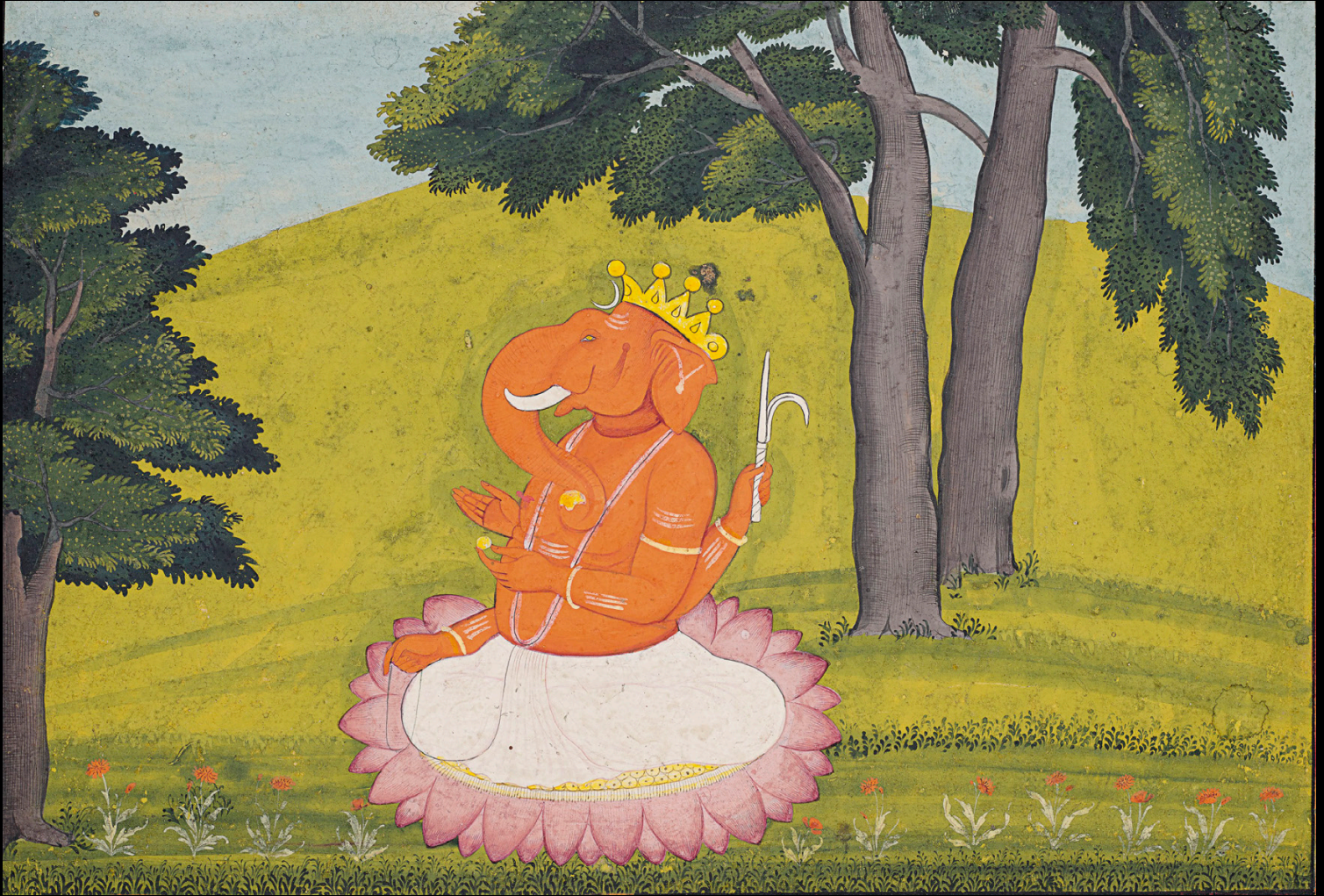
Seated on a lotus flower at three-quarters view, the Lord Ganesha is depicted here, carrying an elephant goad, a rosary, and the god's preferred sweet, *ladoo*. As the remover of obstacles and god of beginnings, this image of Ganesha would have been the opening folio of the *Gita Govinda* series from which it was taken. The lush and detailed landscape of the present composition is representative of that which pervades and defines the entire series. Artists from Guler often utilized a technique of burnishing the backside of the painting in order to deeply embed the colors into the paper support—evidenced by the still-vibrant palette of this eighteenth-century painting.

Painted by the generation following Nainsukh and Manaku, the present image contains many stylistic similarities to another Ganesha folio from the same workshop, currently located at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. L.2018.44.23). Note the similar treatment of the trees and vegetation, as well as the rendering of the crown with five points that playfully bend and are each surmounted by spheres; a stylization of iconography extremely common among paintings from the Guler atelier.

Sanskrit text on the verso reads:

*One who has the face of an elephant, one
who is served by the Bhutaganas (celestial
attendants) and others,
One who partakes in the delicious kapittha
(wood apple) and jambu (rose apple) fruits;
Who is the son of Devi Uma and effects the
destruction of sorrows,
I Salute the Lotus-Feet of that Vighneshwara
(the 'Lord Who removes the Obstacles').*

(translation by Navpreet Singh)



Ganesha

Northeastern India, Pala period, 11th century

Gray basalt

26 x 14 1/3 x 3 1/3 in. (66 x 36.3 x 8.4 cm.)

Provenance:

With Moreau-Gobard Gallery, Paris, by the early 1960s.

Acquired from the above by Mr. & Mme Michael Rade.

Thence by descent.

The elephant-headed god sits in the posture of royal ease holding an axe, a fruit, a radish, and a bowl of sweets. His corpulent belly hangs over the short striped dhoti covering his lower body. A serpent draped across his chest takes the place of the standard sacred cord or *yajnopavita* worn by Hindu deities while he is otherwise ornamented in jewels. An eight-petaled lotus floats above his enshrined body while his foot rests on another, met by the mouth of his *vahana*—the rat.

This charming image of the widely adored remover of obstacles is carved into a niche with a decorative, stepped architectural element atop resembling an elaborate temple roof. Carved into a dark igneous rock native to the northeastern Indian kingdom of the Pala dynasty, the relief resembles many of those that graced the exteriors of temples therein.



Illustration to Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*

Mewar, Udaipur, circa 1714

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 ½ x 16 ½ in. (24.1 x 41.9 cm.)

Provenance:

Purchased in the U.S. in 1972 and descended in the Steig family.

The present painting depicts a portion of the love story between Krishna and Radha. Depicted in the lower left corner along with two other figures is likely the poet Jayadeva, author to the Hindu text, sharing it with worshippers. The verdant landscape represented here is Braj—a pastoral region in north central India along the Jamuna river inhabited by Krishna. A verse at the top of the folio sheds some light on the scenes before us:

*May poet Jayadeva's song
Bring joy to sensitive men.
Lord Hari,
Radha suffers in her retreat.
Gita Govinda 6.9.*

(translation by Dr. Harsha Dehejia)

The lively composition is divided according to the principle of *kaksavibhaga* or 'zonal divisions' utilized in Sanskrit dramas; vegetation and architecture create four separate scenes in the present painting. The horizontal register of clouds atop and the style in which vegetation in the form of multiple bowers encloses two of the four scenes are both typical Mewari features.

The present painting closely resembles the style of a widely dispersed manuscript completed in 1714 in honor of Maharana Sangram Singh II of Mewar (r. 1710–34) at the Royal Ontario Museum (971.281.4). The series consists of 271 folios and the present is numbered '137.' Dr. Gusharan Sidhu has identified '144' of this series, which he gifted to the Asian Museum of Art, San Francisco (acc. 1990.217).

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तम् ॥ २ ॥



Krishna with Female Attendants

Bikaner, last quarter of the 17th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (21.3 x 12.7 cm.)

Folio: 13 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 8 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (33.7 x 21.9 cm.)

A light blue sky descends into a mossy green, where the background meets the horizon line of a marble terrace. Green and yellow honeycomb tiles atop the garden pavilion's roof bring out the fluid streaks of golden clouds in the sky. Floral motifs fill the textiles and panels that decorate the pavilion as well as the large bed around which three elegant female attendants wait on a regal figure, hand and foot.

The identity of the adored male herein is revealed by his sky-blue skin and the obscured peacock feather on the proper-left side of his five-pointed diadem. Krishna's crown style resembles that exactly of a Bikaner painter Ibrahim's 1692 *Rasikapriya* illustration in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum of Art (acc. 81.192.3). The present painting exhibits figures with cinched waists, the use of linear perspective, and a gold-speckled border—all typical features of paintings from Bikaner, a major center of painting of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries within Rajasthan. The inscription which appears under the lower right corner of the painted image refers to the divine Krishna in a loving Urdu epithet, "*Mohan Lal*."



Bala Krishna

Southern India, Tamil Nadu, Chola period, 13th century

Copper alloy

4 ¼ in. (10.8 cm.) high

Provenance:

Private Newport Beach collection, acquired in 1962.

Private west coast collection, since 2005.

This bronze figure of the charming child Krishna conjures the god's habit for mischief. In the tenth book of the *Bhagavata Purana*, Krishna's foster mother Yasodha ties him to a wooden mortar to keep him from repeatedly trying to steal butter balls, like the one he holds in his hand here. This bronze image captures the endearing butter thief crawling nude (although beneath elaborate jewelry), revealing his well-nourished and youthful body. The present figure wears multilayered necklaces that fit close to the chest, surmounted by a longer necklace with jewels at its center and floral elements at each side, mirroring the central ornaments of his upper arm bands and bracelets. He also wears a harness with a kirtimukha fastening and a charm box. His backside is given equal attention as his front.

The style of well-modeled and unique ornamentation seen here is characteristic of the Chola period, considered the height of Indian bronze casting. Although images of Bala Krishna are extremely rare, the divine figure in this image became an object of popular worship in southern India by the medieval period. The only other published example of a Chola-period Bala Krishna image depicts him supine, with one of his small toes in his mouth (R. Nagaswamy, *Masterpieces of South Indian Bronzes*, Ahmedabad, 1983, p.162, pl.174; also in *Timeless Delight*, Ahmedabad, 2006, p.227, fig.4). The present child figure's head is modeled with fine hair and a leaf-shaped hairpin like the supine child-god while examples from the subsequent Vijayanagara period donned high cylindrical headdress. As the majority of examples appear to be much more schematic imaginations of the deity than the present figure, it is reasonable to conclude that despite direct comparable examples, this bronze figure of Bala Krishna is a rare and unique artifact of the Chola period.



Shiva and Parvati

Murshidabad, circa 1780

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 10 x 8 in. (25.7 x 20.3 cm.)

Folio: 11 x 9 in. (28.2 x 22.9 cm.)

The present painting depicts Lord Shiva and Parvati seated under a tree atop Mount Kailash. An even line of trees and palms dot the horizon, dividing a clear blue sky and a vast expanse of green. Shiva, seated on a tiger pelt, is adorned with serpents which curl around his neck and arms. On his forehead is his third eye, topped by a crescent moon. From his piled hair flows the river of Ganges which splits the mountain in two. He is equipped with two *damaru*—a divine instrument which produces the sounds that create and regulate the universe—one in his proper left hand, and another hanging from his trident, along with pennants that billow in the breeze. Beside him is Parvati, seated upon a lotus flower. She holds her hands open in respect as she gazes upon her lover. Both she and Shiva have glowing nimbuses marking their divinity. Below the couple rests Shiva's faithful *vahana*, Nandi, the sacred bull.



Shiva and Parvati (Uma Maheshvara)

Northeastern India, Pala period, 11th-12th century

Phyllite stone

10 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (25.4 cm.) high

Provenance:

From a private European collection, acquired in the 1980s, by repute.

The divine couple depicted here is referred to as 'Uma-Maheshvara', as the god and goddess demonstrate their loving union in this affectionate display. The present sculpture was created according to a standardized convention: Shiva (Maheshvara) sits atop a lotus in *rajalalitasana*, the posture of royal ease, with Parvati (Uma) on his left thigh. Shiva holds a partially opened blue lotus in his upper right hand while his lower right lovingly raises his consort's chin. His lower left hand wraps around Parvati's waist, gently touching the bottom of her left breast. Parvati holds a mirror and wraps her opposite arm around Shiva's shoulder where her delicate hand rests. Shiva's left hand holds a large trident in a strong grip. Their pendant legs are supported by Nandi and a lion, respectively. A devotee is depicted to their lower left.

While the present stele is somewhat formulaic in terms of iconography, it is enhanced with subtle details in the deities' countenances that convey desire. Moreover, the animal vehicles or *vahana*, participate in the scene, staring playfully and *adoringly* at their two masters. This small stele is carved with significant depth and, evidently, with great care. Many similar Pala-period images of Uma-Maheshvara can be found in the Patna Museum, where they are described as originating from Bihar.



Vishnu

South India, Tamil Nadu, Vijayanagara period, 16th century

Copper alloy

28 in. (71.1 cm.) high

Provenance:

Henry Spencers and Son Auctioneers, The Square, Retford, January 1996.

Private New York collection, since the early 2000s.

The male deity stands on a lotus pedestal in powerful *samabhanga*. Vishnu is richly clad in elaborate jewelry, including anklets, a festooned triple-banded belt with a *kirtimukha* ornament at its center, a beaded girdle, a thick sacred thread or *yajnopavita*, bracelets, armlets, necklaces, earrings and a tall cylindrical crown. His identity is revealed by the flaming *chakra* and conch he wields in his upper two hands.

Sculptors of the Vijayanagara period inherited their techniques and style from the master casters of the Chola period. The style of sculpture is, however, distinguished from the earlier period by standardization of deities' ornaments and a more stolid appearance, overall—perhaps because of the volume of image production during this period of great Hindu patronage. Just as those created in Tamil Nadu in prior centuries, the present sculpture was both an important temple commission as well as an object of transient worship, as it is fitted for processions with bronze loops and tangs at its base.

The present figure is representative of the Vijayanagara style, with rigid pleats descending down the figure's dhoti and incised petals on the lotus base. Vishnu's cylindrical crown is also shared by most Vijayanagara-period bronzes, including a fifteenth-century figure of Varaha in the Victoria Albert Museum (IM.6-1924). This bronze Vishnu, however, has a lightness and life which comes through his carefully-modelled hands and soft belly. Such details transform his symmetrical and impassive countenance into one of divine power and perfection.



Matrika Lotus Mandala

Nepal, 16th-17th century

Copper alloy

7 1/8 in. (18.3 cm.) in diameter

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources, item no. 7628.

A bronze lotus springs from a stem decorated with foliate sprays at each of the stepped base's four corners. Each of the eight movable petals is cast to convey several layers of the closed lotus bud. The goddesses within are identified by the implements they carry and their *vahanas* (mounts), corresponding to those of their male counterparts: Varahi atop a buffalo, Mahalakshmi atop a lion, Maheshvari atop Nandi, Vaishnavi atop Garuda, Indrani atop an elephant, Kumari atop a peacock, Brahmani atop a goose, and Chamunda atop a corpse. The present example bears a striking resemblance to the sixteenth-century Navadurga lotus mandala at the Newark Museum of Art (acc. 90.400).



Illustration to the *Devi Mahatmya*: Kali Withdraws from Vishnu

Jaipur, circa 1800

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (28.9 x 19.1 cm.)

Folio: 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (29.8 x 19.7 cm.)

Provenance:

Private French collection.

The present scene depicts the first episode of the *Devi Mahatmya* during the time of *pralaya*, the period between the cyclical destruction and creation of the universe when the primordial ocean is all that exists. Vishnu is depicted in deep sleep amongst the cosmic waters while Brahma prepares to create the next universal cycle. Brahma's efforts, however, are interrupted by two demons who emerge to kill him. Alarmed, he attempts to awaken Vishnu to slay the demons, singing a hymn of praise. Brahma sings to the great goddess Mahamaya, the personification of Vishnu's sleep, and asks her to release him from her spell. As Devi proceeds to retreat from Vishnu's body she appears before Brahma. Vishnu then awakens and slays the demons, thereby acting as Devi's instrument in restoring cosmic order.

Here, Devi appears in her form as the ten-headed Dasa Mahavidya Mahakali. This form of the goddess is relatively rare in the Indian painting tradition, as she is more commonly portrayed in her one-headed, four-armed image, trampling Shiva. However, the present form shares many iconographic attributes with the more common form. Clad in a garland of severed heads and skirt of dismembered arms, Kali holds items representing the powers of each of the gods in her ten hands: a severed head, trident, bow, mace, conch, sword, and *chakra*. Her outstretched tongues, bared teeth, long unruly hair, large nimbus and strong stance convey her fierceness. Below, Vishnu reclines, and Brahma emerges from Vishnu's navel on a lotus, flanked by the demons Madhu and Kaitabha. Fine lines of water and lotuses comprise the cosmic ocean, while a horizon of foliage bisects the background with a pale blue-grey sky above. This partitioning of the background reinforces the hierarchical scale of the painting and thus emphasizes Kali's great power.



Kali Trampling Shiva

Rajasthan, Jaipur, 18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 7 1/8 x 4 1/2 in. (18.1 x 11.4 cm.)

Folio: 9 7/8 x 7 1/4 in. (25.1 x 18.4 cm.)

Provenance:

Nik Douglas, British Virgin Islands, 17 December 1982.

The James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection, Chicago.

According to Hindu mythology, there was once a powerful demon named Raktabija who received a boon allowing him to replicate himself whenever a drop of his blood touched the earth. When the demon engaged in battle with the gods, Kali spread her tongue over the battlefield to prevent any of the demon's blood from hitting the ground, thus facilitating his defeat. Kali, however, became drunk with bloodlust and after her victory, the goddess went on a rampage. She proceeded to kill anyone who crossed her path, adorning herself with the dismembered parts of her victims. Afraid that Kali would not stop until she destroyed all the cosmos, Shiva laid down on the battlefield in her path. Upon seeing her consort beneath her foot, she suddenly realized her mistake and halted her spree.

This painting illustrates the moment Shiva pacifies Kali, appearing in her form as Dakshinakali, the benevolent mother. Dakshinakali is typically depicted with her right foot on Shiva's chest, while her more fearsome form as Vamakali is usually shown with her left foot on his chest. She holds a severed head and scimitar in two of her four hands and wears a skirt of dismembered arms from her rampage. Kali's typical garland of severed heads is replaced here with a string of severed heads around her chignon, and her large, outstretched tongue drips with the blood of her victims. A pale, prostrate Shiva lays below, gazing up at Kali. By presenting Kali as literally trampling Shiva, this archetypal image demonstrates the extent to which Shiva's transcendental power is only possible through interaction with Kali.



Chinnamasta

Rajasthan, Jaipur, 18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 7 1/8 x 4 1/2 in. (18.1 x 11.4 cm.)

Folio: 8 7/8 x 6 7/8 in. (22.5 x 17.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Nik Douglas, British Virgin Islands, 17 December 1982.

The James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection, Chicago.

In the Hindu tradition, Chinnamasta (or ‘Severed Head’) is one of the ten *mahavidyas* (incarnations of the great goddess Devi). According to the *Pranatosinitantra*, Parvati was bathing in the wilderness with two yoginis, Dakini and Varnini, when they became famished. Parvati resolved to decapitate herself so that they may be nourished by her blood, thus embodying Chinnamasta.

Here, the goddess appears seated on a throne, worshipped by a ruler and his wife kneeling beside her, holding a scimitar in her right hand and her own head on a platter in her left. A crown sits just above her third eye, while thin wisps of hair hang loose and her tongue lolls. The goddess is adorned with pearl and emerald jewelry, and her skin is rendered a characteristic orange-red complexion. Thin streams of blood can be seen flowing from her neck to the mouths of the yoginis that flank her. Chinnamasta’s iconography encompasses elements of both terror and heroism by way of severing her own head and then offering her blood for nourishment, ultimately symbolizing the transformations of death and life.



Lalita Maha Tripura Sundari

Mandi, style of Sajnu, circa 1810

Opaque watercolor heightened with silver and gold on paper

Image: 9 1/8 x 5 7/8 in. (23.2 x 14.9 cm.)

Folio: 11 3/4 x 8 1/4 in. (29.8 x 21 cm.)

Provenance:

Royal Mandi collection.

Acquired by the present owner on the UK art market.

The majesty of this supreme *shakti* is perfectly captured by this finely decorated Pahari composition. Her beauty, as her name indicates, transcends the vast Tripura (three demon citadels) within which she is believed to have defeated many demons. For she is the transcendent form of the supreme Devi Parvati and rules over the Trimurti (divine triad) of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Thus, she is also known as 'Raja Rajeshwari,' meaning the 'Queen of all Kings and Rulers.'

The *mahavidhya's* power is not only captured by her elaborate enthronement and godly ornamentation, but also by the ethereal gaze the artist rendered so well; her wide and bright third eye clearly visible in this rendering of the deity in profile. Her identity is revealed by her red skin and her four arms, two of which hold an elephant goad and a lasso.

Her identity is corroborated by a small painted image, pasted within the border atop the painting folio depicting the Parvati *yantra*: a six-pointed star within an eight-petaled lotus surrounded by a square with gates in the four cardinal directions. It is typical to find such an associated *yantra* as the worship of *shaktis* always incorporates these diagrammatic mystic charms.

Such worship consists in throwing *kumkuma* (vermilion powder) over the *yantra* while speaking aloud the many epithets of Lalita Maha Tripura Sundari.

The present subject is rare among published paintings, however, one example can be found in the Victoria and Albert Museum, though it is currently identified as Kali (acc. CIRC.660-1969). The present painting, however, differs quite distinctly in style as it can be attributed to the style of Sajnu, the master artist who is credited with bringing the sophistication of Kangra and Guler paintings of the time to Mandi. Her profile, in particular, resembles many subjects executed by Sajnu (see Archer, W.G., *Indian Painting from the Punjab Hills*, Sotheby Parke Bernet, London, 1973, Mandi no. 43).

Here, Lalita appears enthroned atop the terrace of a marble palace; a *pietre-dure* arch between two marble pillars frames the goddess. The black margin with floral petal and leaf scrolls in white and gold meets a red-speckled yellow border. This follows, as Sajnu is known for the use of spandrels to frame his compositions and an exquisite use of florals.



Uma (Parvati)

South India, Tamil Nadu, Chola period, 11th-12th century

Copper Alloy

15 x 8 ½ in. (38.1 x 21.5 cm.)

Provenance:

The estate of Kelly Brook, acquired in India in the 1950s.

Galleria Ethnologica, Forli, Italy, 2011.

Uma appears graceful yet powerful upon a tiered lotus throne. A crown surmounts her discreetly smiling face, modeled with wide eyes, a sharp nose and full lips. Her sacred thread or *yajnopavita*, guides the eye from her neck down her voluptuous torso and soft belly to her lap, where her beautifully detailed skirt covers her legs to her mid-calf, below which multi-banded anklets and beaded ornaments decorate her down to her feet. She sits in *lalitasana*, the 'posture of royal ease,' with one leg retracted and the other hanging relaxedly off of her throne.

Most images of Parvati in this seated posture belong to a larger group referred to as 'Somaskanda,' which describes the divine family constituted by Shiva, Parvati and Skanda. The present figure of Parvati, or 'Uma' in the native language of Tamil Nadu, was almost certainly part of a larger group of sculptures which served an essential role in a Shaivite temple centuries ago.

"According to Shaiva Siddhanta philosophy, only when he is in the company of his consort Uma does Shiva bestow grace upon an individual soul. A metal image of the god together with Uma and their son Skanda is thus the principal image of such individual grace, and every single temple, wealthy or otherwise possesses a Somaskanda image. (V. Dehejia, *The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes of South India*, New York, 2002, p.128.)." The image is of such great importance that it may be used as a substitute for any godly image needed for Hindu worship. While the present sculpture, like most figures of its size, was commissioned for and essential for temple worship, the group of three portable bronze images were also processional. Such is indicated by the holes fit for poles seen here, which enable worshippers to carry the divine figures into the streets for all to experience *darshan*—to meet the gaze of the divine.



There are instances in which bronze Somaskanda images were cast as a whole as well as instances in which they have been cast separately, while intended to be experienced together. One instance of a separately-cast Somaskanda group, such as that from which the present originates, can be found at the Puran Vitankar Temple in Tirumangalakudi, dated circa-1100 by Dehejia (see *ibid*, p.128, fig. 1). The present figure of Uma, however, differs from this one stylistically.

The eleventh or twelfth century date for the present figure is supported by the crown style, which follows that of Parvati's in a well known group depicting the marriage of Shiva and Parvati from the Tiruvenkadu temple, circa 1012, now in the Tanjore Art Gallery (see V. Dehejia, *Art of the Imperial Cholas*, New York, 1990, p. 72, fig. 55). The three tiers of the conical crown and the central ornamented petal, as well as the simple layered necklaces and arm bands framing her buoyant breasts with articulated nipples, however, more closely matches that of a Somaskanda image of Parvati at the Shiva Temple in Paundarikapuram attributed to the late twelfth century (see V. Dehejia, *The Sensuous and the Sacred: Chola Bronzes of South India*, New York, 2002, p. 43, fig. 22). Moreover, the absence of the three distinct lines above Uma's abdomen (*trivali tarangini*), a later Chola convention, supports the early dating of this bronze.



Six illustrations to a *Rasikapriya* series

Kangra, attributed to Purkhu, circa 1820

This group of six illustrations depicts the different moods of lovers (nayakas and nayikas) as described by the poet Keshav Das in his 'Compendium of Courtly Love,' the *Rasikapriya*. Written around 1591, the *Rasikapriya* explores love in all its myriad forms, often through the ideal lovers Radha and Krishna, whose romance is likened to the union of the soul with god. His vivid musical style and deeply poetic depiction of love's turbulence and passion inspired generations of poets and artists alike.

In particular, *Rasikapriya* subjects became especially popular for the Pahari Painters of the Punjab hills throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Their paintings reflected a deep culture of Vaishnavism—the religion of love—in which the adoration of physical beauty develops into divine love. Thus, Kangra paintings often revolved around erotic sentiment, a theme perfectly encapsulated in the *Rasikapriya*. (M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings on Love*, New Delhi, 1962)

There are fourteen comparable paintings from a *Rasikapriya* series in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum. (W.G. Archer, *Indian Paintings from the Punjab Hills*, London, 1973, Vol. I (text), no. 66 (i-iv), pp. 305-307; Vol. II (plates), pp. 228-230).

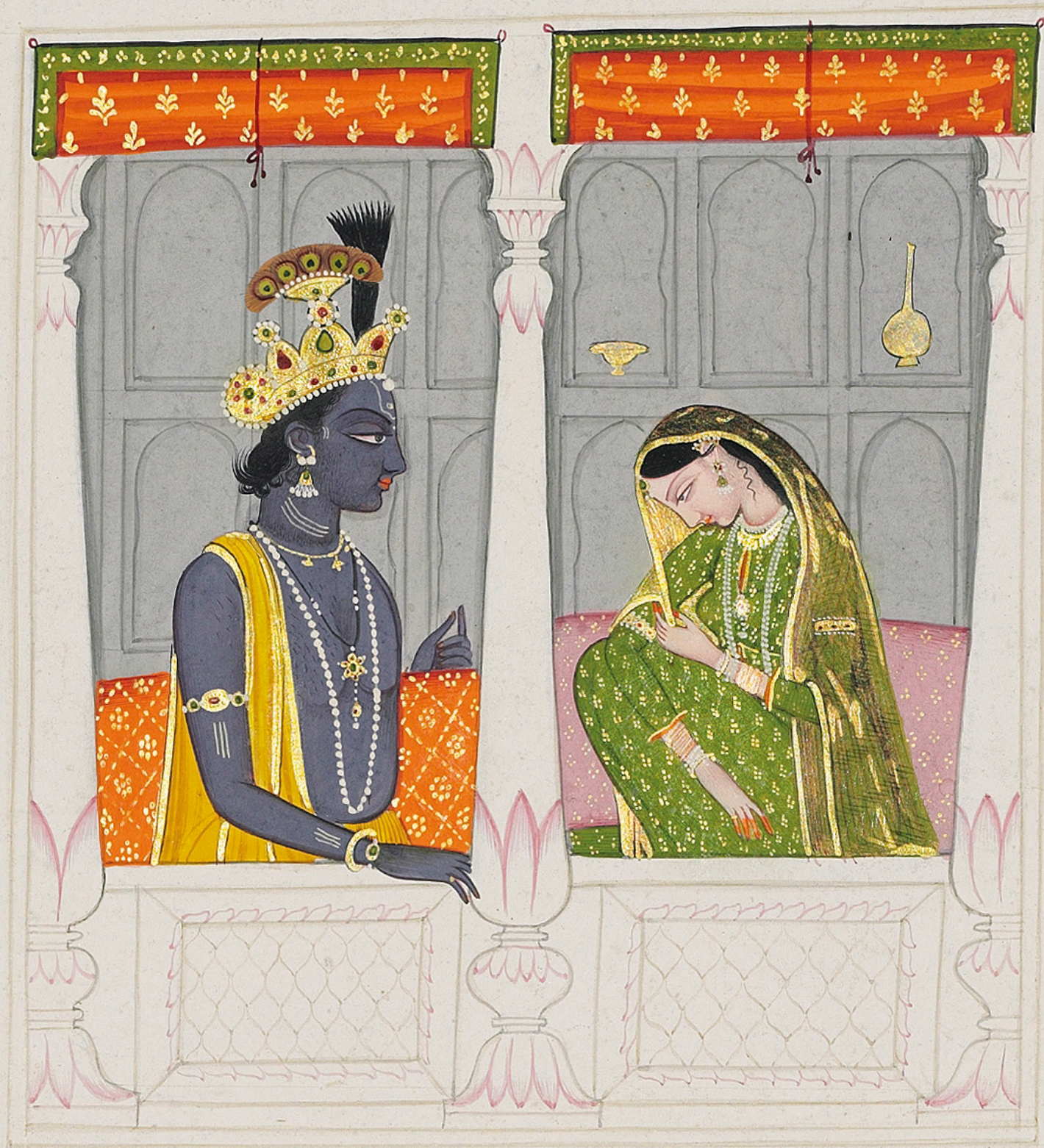


Illustration to a *Rasikapriya* series: Krishna and Radha at a Jharokha Window

Kangra, attributed to Purkhu, circa 1820

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 10 3/8 x 6 3/4 in. (26.4 x 17.3 cm.)

Folio: 12 7/8 x 9 1/4 in. (32.8 x 23.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Royal Mandi collection.

Private English collection.

The present scene depicts Krishna and Radha seated in a Jharoka window. Two *sakhis* converse in the fenced terrace below, overlooking a lush flower garden and decorative fountain. Adorned in a peacock feather crown, Krishna lovingly gazes at Radha's beautiful visage, yet she will not meet his eyes. Instead she stares at the small scratches scattered across her lover's chest, and pinches her *dupatta* in her left hand, pulling it as if to shield herself. The folio number '193' is inscribed in the upper left corner and the reverse with '12ll.'

A line of black Braj Bhasa above refers to Radha's secret state of heavy separation; the manifestation of pride, or jealousy, induced by seeing or hearing evidence of another woman. *Guru mana* is the strongest *mana*, and reflects the fullness of one's love, ultimately enhancing its sublimity.

The verso is inscribed with a verse from the *Rasikapriya* in alternating red and black script:

*"Forgetting his quarrel with Radha, Krishna met
her and revelled in the enchantment of her beauty,
love and laughter. On seeing nail-marks on his person
beneath his garment, she turned her gaze away, and
her eyes drooped like a lotus flower at the sight of the
moon."*

(translation from M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra
Paintings on Love*, New Delhi, 1962, p.89)

The present illustration captures Radha's reaction to the scratches of another woman. While she is filled with longing and jealousy when confronted with Krishna's countless love affairs, their pure and eternal love always persists.



Illustration to a *Rasikapriya* series: Radha Seated with a Confidant in a Pavilion
Kangra, attributed to Purkhu, circa 1820

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 10 7/8 x 7 in. (27.6 x 17.7 cm.)

Folio: 13 x 9 1/4 in. (33 x 23.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Royal Mandi collection.

Private English collection.

Seated upon a lush carpet of scrolling florals, Radha listens attentively to her *sakhi*, one hand resting on a vibrant orange cushion as the other is raised to her chin. Outside, blooming creepers peek out among the foliage where two love birds sit apart among the branches, just as the separated lovers Radha and Krishna. The *yonis* and *lingam*-shaped vessels behind Radha, as well as the tall pointed minaret, are symbolic of desire and longing. A line of black Braj Bhasa above refers to Krishna's manifested state of heavy separation and Radha's state of distress caused by quarrels with Krishna. The folio number '196' is inscribed in the upper left corner, the reverse with '9ll.'

The verso is inscribed with a verse from the *Rasikapriya* in alternating red and black script:

Sakhi to nayika: "If you have a complaint against your dear one, you should speak of it only in private to him; it would be wrong to disclose his guilts publicly. If his eyes stray in undesirable directions, you may try to restrain them, but not to prick them with a knife. Remember, he is the same Syama, separation from whom can kindle such a fire in the hearts of women that a solution of camphor will have to be sprayed to cool it. You should speak as propriety demands, and not speak harshly to one who has abandoned everything for the sake of your love."

(translation from M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings on Love*, New Delhi, 1962, p.90)



Illustration to a *Rasikapriya* series: An Older Sakhi Comforts a Forlorn Radha
Kangra, attributed to Purkhu, circa 1820

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 10 x 6 ½ in. (25.4 x 16.4 cm)

Folio: 12 7/8 x 9 1/8 in. (32.8 x 23.1 cm.)

Provenance:

Royal Mandi collection.

Private English collection.

A forlorn Radha is seated on a terrace pavilion overlooking a lake and hills. Typical of the Pahari style, great attention is paid to the rolling hills in the background—diminutive figures appear dispersed amongst the countryside, rowing in boats, swimming, and strolling in the fields. Lotiform columns frame the scene, almost as if looking through a ‘window to the past.’ Next to Radha sits an older *sakhi* (companion) who comforts the separated lover amidst her bout of malaise. The folio number ‘198’ is inscribed in the upper left corner and the reverse with ‘8ll.’

A line of black Braj Bhasa above reads “*radhika ko prakas laghu mana*” (“Radhika’s manifested state of slight separation”). According to Keshav Das, *mana* is the separation of lovers due to jealousy and obduracy. *Laghu mana* occurs when the *nayika* herself sees the *nayaka* with another woman.

The verso is inscribed with a verse from the *Rasikapriya* in alternating red and black script:

Sakhi: “Even the pretence of annoyance with the dear one is unworthy, and such indifference is indeed unimaginable.”

Radha: “Who is dear, if he is himself indifferent?”

Sakhi: “Only yesterday he was sending his messages of solicitude through me.”

Radha: “Why did you not come yesterday, if you profess goodness?”

Sakhi: “Today I offer to act as a truce-maker.”

Radha: “It seems you will only cause a breach, for I am disillusioned by the deeds of Krishna, who like a kanera bud is white within, though red without.”

Sakhi: “Is there a witness who can be asked to verify this accusation?”

Radha: “I would need no witness, for I have seen things myself.”

(translation from M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings on Love*, New Delhi, 1962, p.91)

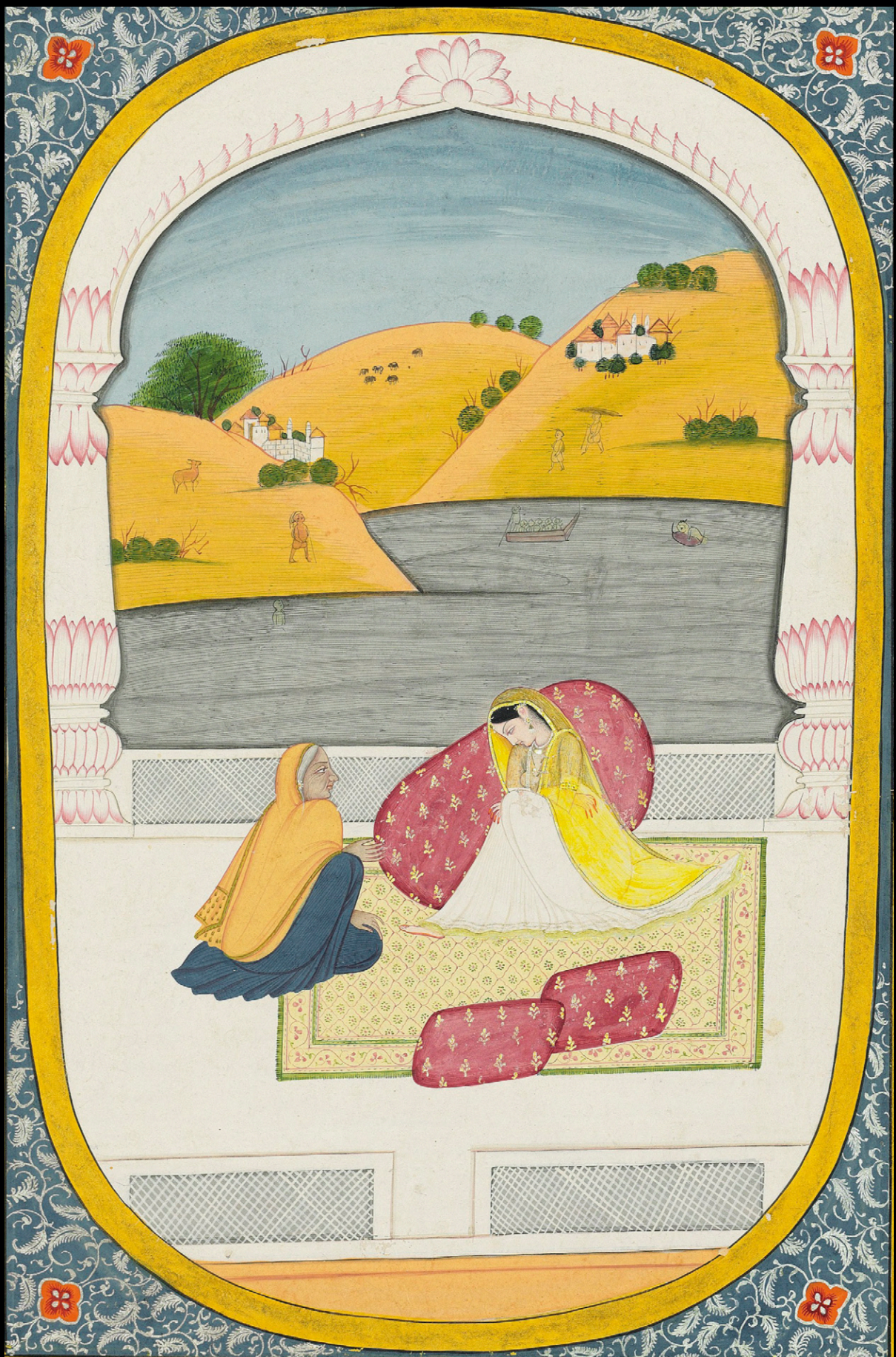


Illustration to a *Rasikapriya* series: Krishna Enthroned

Kangra, attributed to Purkhu, circa 1820

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 10 1/8 x 6 3/4 in. (25.7 x 17.2 cm.)

Folio: 12 7/8 x 8 5/8 in. (32.4 x 21.9 cm.)

Provenance:

Royal Mandi collection.

Private English collection.

The present painting depicts a *sakhi* conveying a message to Krishna from Radha, mediating between the two on some matter of love. Krishna sits against an orange bolster cushion on a celadon green throne. He wears a vibrant saffron *jama* and is adorned in jewels—on his head is his signature peacock feather crown. In the background two lovebirds gaze at each other across the foliage which is interspersed with pointed cypresses—a symbol of Krishna’s passion for Radha. Storm clouds lined in gold descend on the scene, perhaps reflective of some turbulence forming between the fabled lovers. A line of black Braj Bhasa above reads “*pat ini ko vachhan shri Krishna prati*” (“conveying a message to Shri Krishna”), folio number ‘262’ in the upper left corner, the reverse with ‘10ll.’

The verso is inscribed with a verse from the *Rasikapriya* in alternating red and black script:

*Having loved her, why is it that you are involved with
other women? Do not confuse brass with gold. Even if
Saraswati teaches a crow, it cannot sing as sweetly as
a cuckoo. Those who like a mango cannot be satisfied
with a tamarind. Do desist from your misdemeanours.*
12.29

(translation by Dr. Harsha Dehejia)

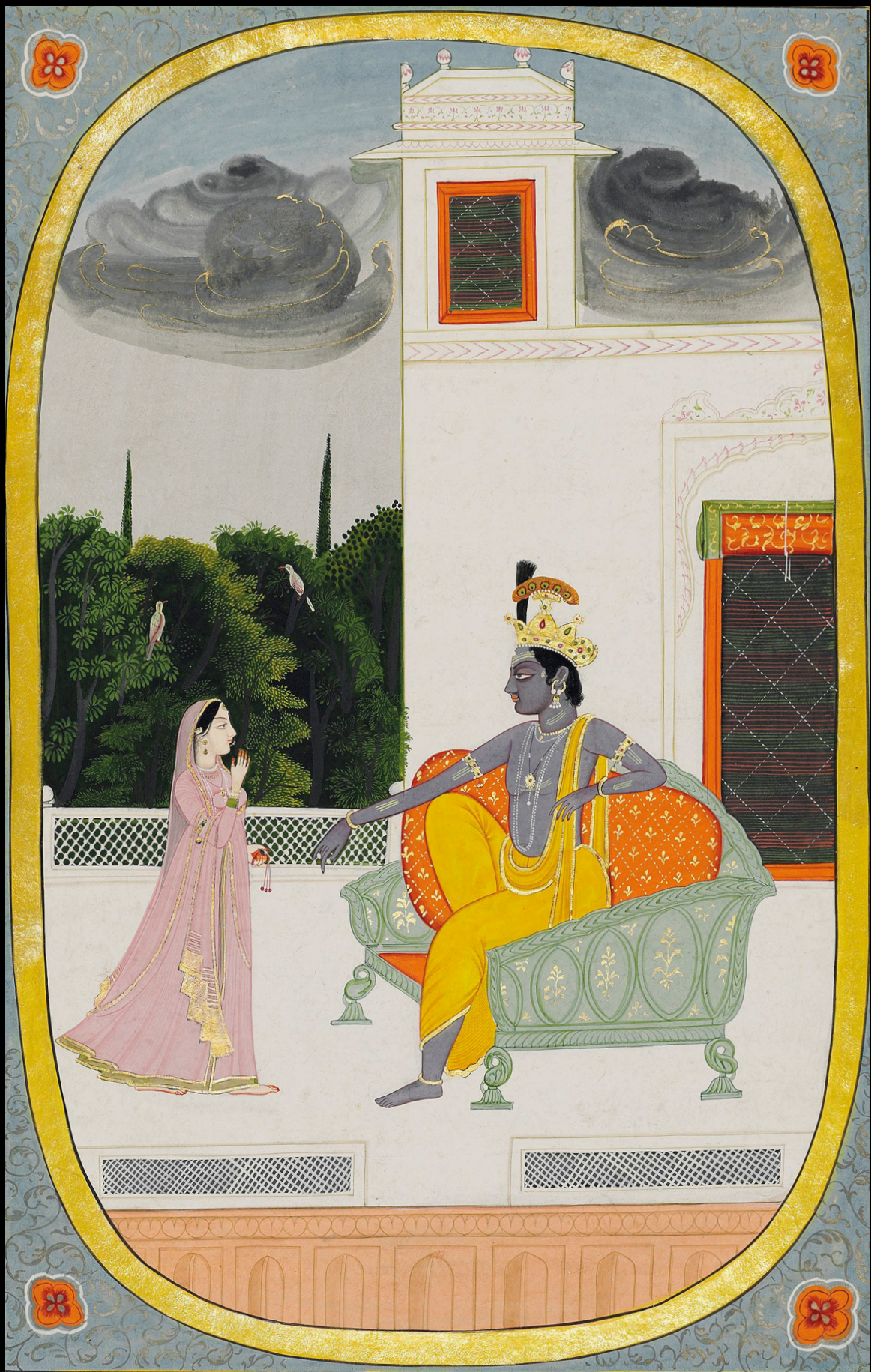


Illustration to a *Rasikapriya* series: Krishna Seated with Radha

Kangra, attributed to Purkhu, circa 1820

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (24.8 x 16.5 cm.)

Folio: 13 x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (33 x 23.2 cm.)

Provenance:

Royal Mandi collection.

Private English collection.

The iconic lovers gaze into each others' eyes, Krishna's hand barely grazing Radha's dress as she pinches her *dupatta* in her right hand. Two *sakhis* (companions) converse nearby. In the background, lush foliage emerges over the terrace walls. Among the branches sit two birds, resting under a vibrant pink and orange sky framed by undulating clouds. A line of black Braj Bhasa above reads "*saatvik ki kriti udaharan*" (an example of an involuntary expression of emotion), folio number '305' in the upper left corner; the reverse with '12ll.' This refers to the eight involuntary expressions of emotions, as listed by Keshav Das: expressions of "stupor, trembling, speechlessness, pallor, tearfulness, perspiration, thrill and fainting." (M.S. Randhawa, *Kangra Paintings on Love*, New Delhi, 1962, p.51).

The verso is inscribed with a verse from the *Rasikapriya* in alternating red and black script:

*O foolish girl! Abandon all your desires and do not
get your heart on fire. Radha and Krishna are the
ideal romantic couple, better than Rati and Kama.
Even Parvati cannot sow discord between them, and
it would be foolish of Saraswati to come in between
them. The two of them are of the same mind, they
share the same thoughts and have one breath. They
may appear two in body but are united by their eyes.*
15.9

(translation by Dr. Harsha Dehejia)

This is likely a conversation between the two *sakhis*, one warning the other not to covet the handsome Krishna or attempt to come in between the couple. Watching the two together, she speaks to the divinity of Radha and Krishna's love, which reaches higher heights than even that of the gods. Not even the god of love himself, Kama, can compete with the depth of their love—and who could, when the union of Radha and Krishna is one and the same as the union of the soul with god?

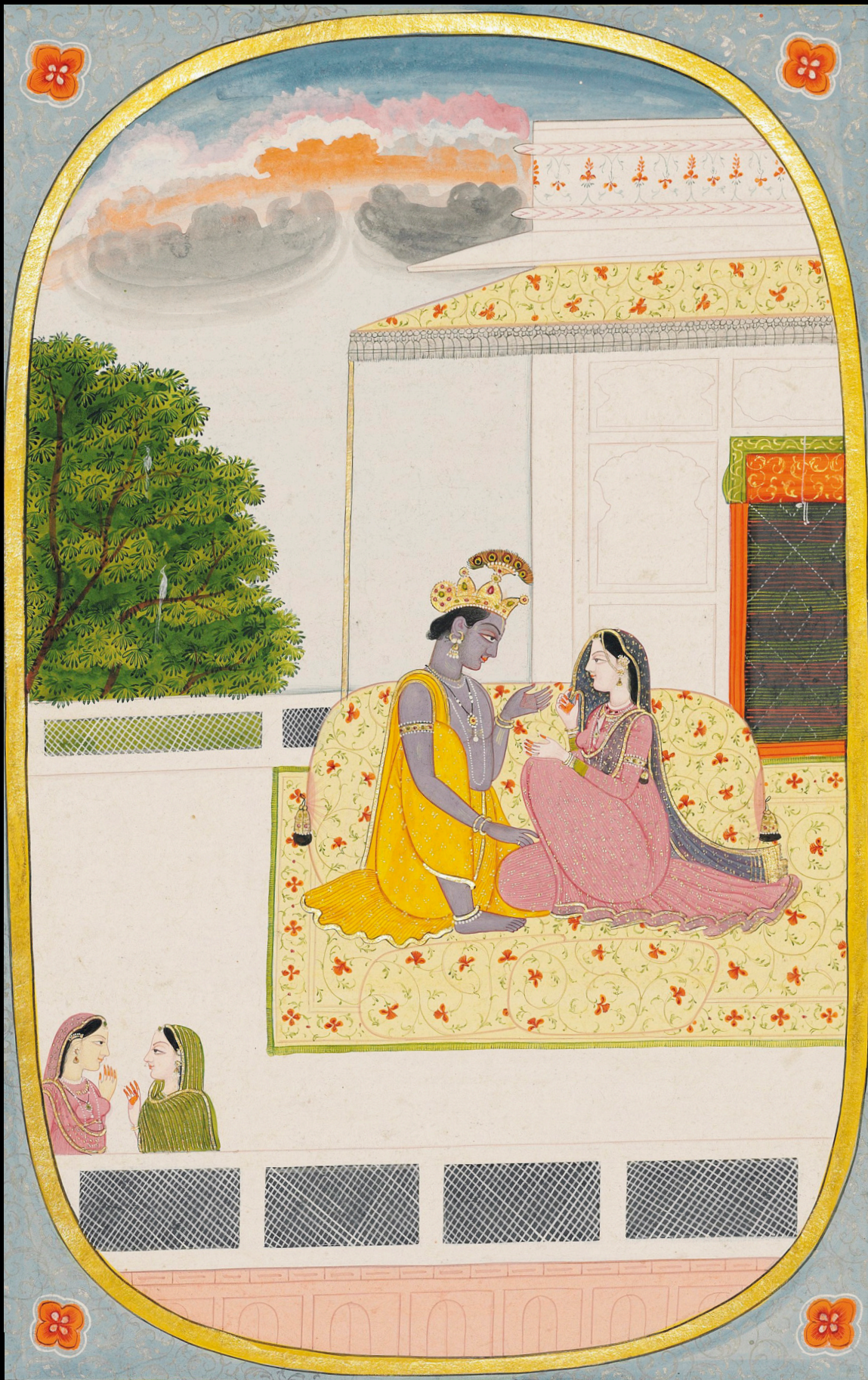


Illustration to a *Rasikapriya* series: Krishna Conversing with a Sakhi

Kangra, attributed to Purkhu, circa 1820

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (24.8 x 16.2 cm.)

Folio: 13 x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (33 x 23.2 cm.)

Provenance:

Royal Mandi collection.

Private English collection.

Seated against a floral lattice cushion upon a deep green carpet decorated with scrolling vines, Krishna speaks with Radha's *sakhi* (confidante). Adorned in pearls, with his signature peacock feather crown upon his head, Krishna is the image of princely grace and male virility. The outdoor terrace overlooks lush foliage interspersed with pointed cypresses—symbols of Krishna's ardent desire for Radha. Flowering creepers, a common motif in Kangra painting, curl among the branches. Upon them, a pair of lovebirds sit apart, reflecting Krishna and Radha's "love in separation," (one of the repeated themes employed in *Rasikapriya* series). Above, a clear blue sky belies billowing clouds tinged in bright orange and outlined in silver. The folio number '308' is written in Braj Bhasa in the upper left corner; the reverse with '9ll.'

The verso is inscribed with verses from the *Rasikapriya* in alternating red and black script:

*When a poet combines sadness with romantic poetry
that is not good poetry. 16.6*

A messenger speaks to the nayak:

*O Rasiklal! (Krishna). Do not be stubborn, as that
nayika on seeing me will give up her pleasures and
abandon me as well. She has given up bathing, eating
and charity. She cannot think and it seems that she
will die any moment. Under these circumstances it
is not proper that I go there now as your messenger.
Taking a letter from you is out of the question. Even
at best she would only reluctantly take love messages
and stay away from her friends. These days a furnace
burns in her heart. In this state of grief how would
she receive me with a smile? 16.7*

(translation by Dr. Harsha Dehejia)



A Nayika Writing a Note

Kangra, circa 1810-1830

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 8 ¼ x 6 in. (21 x 15.2 cm.)

Folio: 9 ¾ x 7 ¾ in. (24.8 x 19.7 cm.)

Within the frame of an arched window, a *nayika* (heroine) sits on a carpeted terrace dressed in a flowing green sari and orange veil with gold trim. She wears large ear and nose rings, strands of pearls and numerous jewels and ornaments. Her female companion awaiting the finished note to deliver to her beloved. Below, writing implements on a covered gold and jeweled plinth appear along with a knife, scissors, a small gold cup and a bowl.

The central female represents the consummate Kangra heroine, with a demurely lowered gaze and an archetypal profile, sharply defined features and jet-black hair. Her fine nose, small red lips and shapely chin are enhanced by her subtle smile. Whether the figure is a courtesan or princess, this is an idealized rendering of a *nayika*, her features displaying the classic look of a perfect Pahari heroine found in countless miniatures since the development of the Kangra style. The present painting is a wonderful example the pan-Pahari style of Kangra originated at Guler as a response to the increasing influence of naturalistic Mughal painting.



Maiden with a Mirror

Kangra, circa 1810

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 3 $\frac{5}{8}$ in. (12.4 x 9.2 cm.)

Folio: 6 x 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. (15.2 x 12.4 cm.)

Provenance:

The Collection of Hellen and Joe Darion, New York, by February 1968 (no. 39).

The wide and focused eye of the young maiden directs the viewer's gaze directly to the figure's hand with which she applies *kajal* in a mirror held by an affectionate child. She has already adorned herself with a *tikka* (hair ornament), *nath* (nose ring), earrings, necklaces, armbands, and rings. The vermillion on each of her fingertips matches that of the three layers of her diaphanous garments, decorated with green edges matching the window valence above. She appears to be preparing herself for an important event for which the child below has already been groomed. The child's lavender dress matches the magenta and yellow textile that hangs over the base of the window, creating a pleasingly cohesive color palette.

The charming portrait is unmistakably Pahari, epitomizing a bold and colorful tradition that embraces naturalistic Mughal techniques. This type of architectural framing (a view through a window) is typical among paintings from Kangra, in particular, as is the deep blue border with a gold foliate motif and a secondary support of speckled pink paper.



Radha Watching a Storm

Signed 'Mohammadi', Mandi, dated 1824 (Samvat 1854)

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 1/8 x 6 5/8 in. (24 x 17 cm.)

Folio: 11 7/8 x 9 7/8 in. (30.3 x 25 cm.)

Provenance:

Theo Brown and Paul Woner, San Francisco, 1970s-1982.

Private collection, Los Angeles.

Bonhams New York, 19 Mar 2018, lot 3106.

Verso inscribed:

S[amvat] 30 re Bha [drapada] pra [vishte] 10 Shri Miyan Sahaba ki nazar kita ch[tere]. Mahamadiye; translated, "Presented to Miyan Saheb (exalted member of the royal family) on the 10th day of the Bhadrapada month of the year 30 (corresponding to 1854) by the painter Mohammadi".

The painter evokes the atmosphere of the monsoon season with a turbulent sky of billowing rain clouds and lightning bolts. The passionate *nayika* clad in a richly ornamented dress looks back to her courtesans, gesturing in the hope that the arrival of the rain will hasten the return of her lover. The powerful and brooding presence of the peacock signifies both the arrival of the rainy season and amplifies the absence of the *nayak*.

Mohammadi (Mohammad Bax) was the disciple of Sajnu, whose prominence as a master artist became fully realized under his new patron Raja Ishvari Sen of Mandi after he left the court of Kangra around 1804. The style favored in Mandi in the early decades of the nineteenth century diverted towards curious subjects and a naïve

style under Shamsher Sen. Sajnu and Mohammadi followed the conventions developed in the Guler and Kangra school and focused on the classic *Bharamasa* and *nayika* love poetry, such as that illustrated in the present painting.

This work is important as it shows the high quality of painting produced in the nineteenth century, indicated by a date on the verso which corresponds to 1824 CE. This remains one of the very few folios bearing the artist's signature. However, the name of the patron in the inscription remains absent and is only referred to by the honorific title "Miyan Saheb." It is possible that this inscription refers to Raja Bijai Sen, who ruled Mandi from 1851 to 1902.

Compare the present painting with a similar scene in the San Diego Museum of Art published in Goswamy & Smith, *Domains of Wonder*, San Diego, 2005, pp.252-3, fig.108. Also see a closely related work of similar size dated to circa-1840, entitled, *Palace Women Watching the Approaching Storm*, sold at Christie's New York, 18 September 2013, lot 363.



Illustration to the *Lanka Kanda* of the *Ramayana*: The Awakening of the Giant Kumbhakarna

Kangra, late 19th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 6 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (16.8 x 21.6 cm.)

Folio: 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (18.8 x 23.5 cm.)

The present painting illustrates a continuous narrative in which two successive episodes of the *Lanka Kanda* from Valmiki's *Ramayana* are shown together in a single picture. The narrative is broken up into its sequential scenes by the clean straight lines of the palace halls. On the right, a large convex room draws your eye to the first scene in the narrative. There sits the giant Kumbhakarna, who has just awoken from a six month's deep sleep. The large audience of demons that surround him inform Kumbhakarna that Rama, Lakshmana and Sugriva's monkey army have gathered outside the palace—their diminutive figures visible in the background, under a tree on top of a mountain.

To the left, the zig-zagging palace staircases lead your eye up to the next episode in which Kumbhakarna goes to meet his older brother Ravana, the ten-headed king of Lanka. With large horns and fangs, and a pearl-studded golden *gada* grasped in his right hand, the giant dwarfs the size of the demons that surround him. In the meeting hall above, the golden skinned Ravana awaits with a black ram at his feet—an offering to sate Kumbhakarna's hunger after his long slumber. Upon their meeting, Kumbhakarna admonished his brother for kidnappig Sita, but nevertheless pledges to destroy Ravana's enemies out of familial loyalty.

This set is likely inspired by a well-known Guler *Lanka Kanda* series produced in 1850. Two paintings of this series were successfully sold at auctions (Bonhams New York, 19 March 2018, lot 3095; and Christie's New York, *The Collection of Paul Walter*, 26 - 27 September 2017, lot 229). A third one is published in *Court Paintings from Persia and India*, Francesca Galloway, London 2016, p. 98, no. 36.

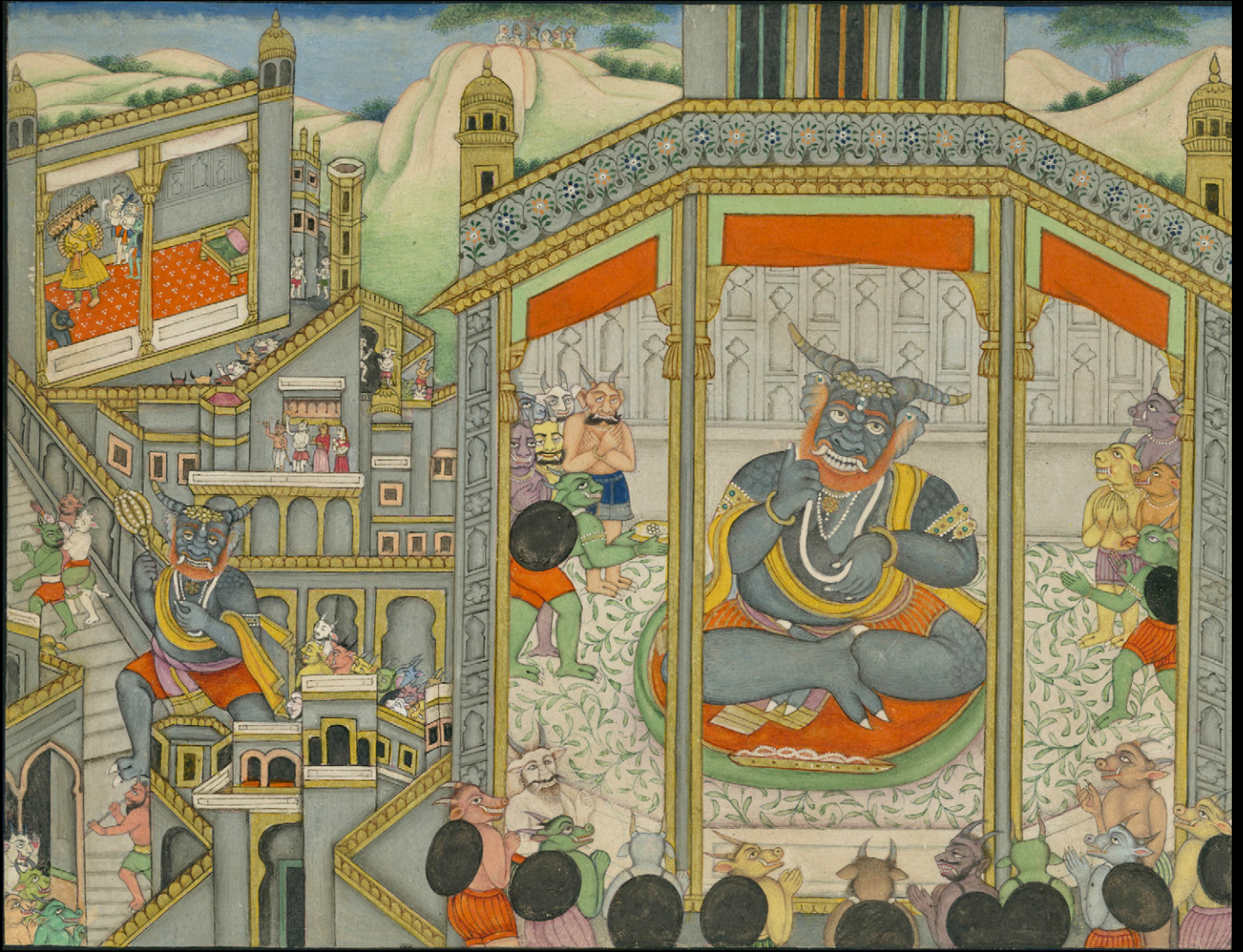


Illustration from the *Ramayana*

Nepal, 18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 8 x 11 ¾ in. (20.3 x 29.8 cm.)

Provenance:

Doris Wiener Gallery, inventory no. P1548 (label on frame).

The present painting, though lacking inscriptions, seems to illustrate a portion of the *Ramayana*, as the three figures on the right side of the composition resemble the exiled triad at the center of the Indian epic: Krishna's avatar Rama, his betrothed, Sita, and his brother Lakshmana. The seven sages depicted, however, may very well be the *saptarishi* or celestial brothers born from Brahma.

While the subject-matter is difficult to elaborate upon, the present is discernibly Nepalese, particularly in palette. The prominent bright reds and blues and heightening with gold closely resemble the pigments used in a well known dispersed eighteenth-century Nepalese *Bhagavata Purana* series executed in a large format of which two folios reside in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 2019.64). The crown and ornamentation style, however, very closely resemble the style of those in a circa-1700 painting from Bilaspur depicting only Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana on a red ground in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (acc. M.87.278.10). Thus, the influence of Indian miniature painting is also evident in this unusual Nepalese illumination of a Hindu epic.



Two illustrations from the *Ramayana*: Sita in Ravana's Palace

Mewar, early 18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 8 ¾ x 15 in. (22.2 x 38.1 cm.)

Provenance:

Purchased in the U.S. in 1972 and descended in the Steig family.

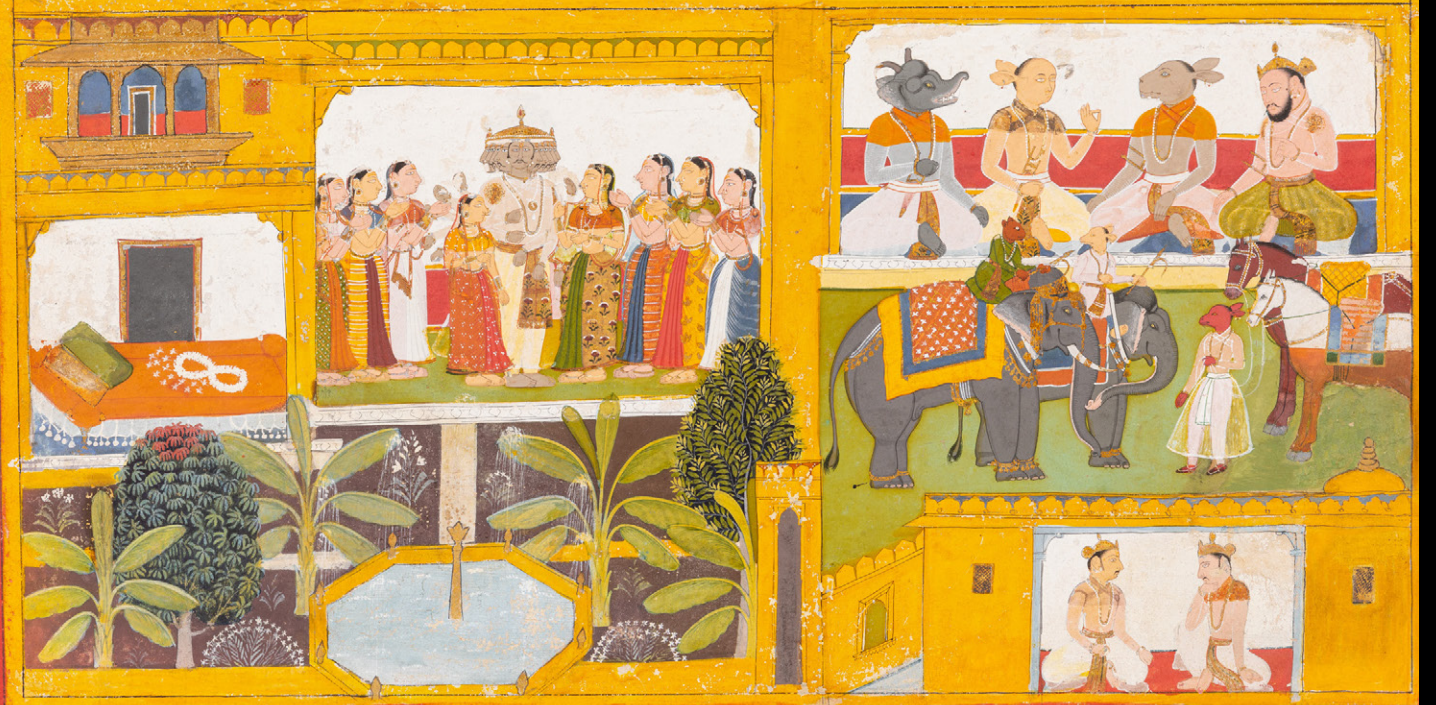
In the present two contiguous illustrations (numbered '99' and '100') of the *Aranyakakanda* book of the great *Ramayana*, the demon King Ravana appears in his palace surrounded by his wives and the daughters of gods and other divine creatures he has previously captured. Before him stands Sita, the wife of Rama, who he has imprisoned. His fortress at Lanka is guarded by his animal-headed minions.

Both folios are representative of a playful style associated with the Rajput principality of Mewar. The red and yellow borders, the prominence of primary colors in the overall compositions, the execution of foliage with pointed leaves splaying out in a circular fashion from a central point; and the sharp profiles of each figure, closely match that of a folio from a dispersed manuscript depicting Rama and Lakshmana searching the forest for Sita dated to circa 1680-1690 at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 1974.148).

॥वनकां॥८८॥पछे रावण॥सीताहें पोतारी राजधानी देवाल तोऊ ओ॥जवे अनेक वाडी॥नल उछलेहे॥देव देखें॥



॥वनकां॥१००॥पछे रावण॥सीताहें राज्य देखलेहे॥जवे अनेक लप्प जोधा बेवाहे॥हाथी घोडा अनेक हे॥सोजे जलन काहे॥



Rama

Eastern India, Orissa, 15th century

Brass

16 ¼ in. (41.2 cm.) high

Provenance:

Acquired in New York in the 1990s.

Despite his smile, Rama appears formidable in this powerful stance with his arms out before him as if holding his characteristic bow and arrow, with which he is able to defeat any demon and deflect any weapon in his way. Rama is the seventh avatar of Vishnu and a legendary king of Ayodhya. He is a prominent figure in the Hindu pantheon, and particularly important within the Hindu tradition of Vaishnavism wherein Vishnu is exalted. Many details of his life come from the *Ramayana*, one of the epic poems of Ancient India authored by the great Maharishi Valmiki. Rama's life and journey is one of perfect adherence to Dharma despite the series of harsh tests he endures, such as his own exile and the kidnapping of his wife Sita.

Here Rama is pictured as the ideal man, just as the *maharishi* describe him—fear-striking and beautiful. This marvelous bronze image from Orissa certainly captures Rama's divine qualities, as he appears only semi-human with his perfect proportions and complete physical symmetry. The artist evidently took great care in matching each minute detail from one side to the other.

Compare the present figure to a fifteenth-century brass figure of Radha published by Vidya Dehejia in *Devi The Great Goddess: Female Divinity in South Asian Art*, Smithsonian Institution, 1999, p. 329, cat no. 77; also sold at Sotheby's New York, 21 March 2019, lot 917. The treatment of the circular, tiered lotus base is nearly identical, as are the lotiform designs that punctuate each piece of jewelry that adorns Radha. The facial features are also strikingly similar despite the difference in sex: note the extremely wide eyes, the prominent nose with a sharp and straight bridge, and the full smiling lips, all beneath a discreet singular brow line. Equal attention is paid to the backside of both images. The present figure's backside reveals an additional two small flowers adorning each of Rama's ears, finely incised strands of hair, and neat tassels fastening each piece of jewelry he wears—a few of many fine qualities of this masterwork of Orissan bronze casting.



Three Folios from a *Sakunavali* series Rajasthan, Udaipur, circa 1720

The following three folios come from an illustrated *Sakunavali* ('Book of Omens' or 'Book of Dreams') series, likely based on texts such as the *Svapna Darshana*, which deals with the significance and interpretation of dreams. Acting as a sort of visual codex, this series was not used simply to analyze one's inner consciousness, as in the Western tradition of dream interpretation, but instead to divine the future.

In *Court Painting at Udaipur Art under the Patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar* (Zurich, 2002, p. 144), art historian Andrew Topsfield writes: "For kings and subjects alike, the interpretation of dreams and omens could be as much a guiding factor in their enterprises as the prescriptions of the astrologers. A cat crossing one's path might nullify plans for a journey. But a cricket (*sarabha*), according to the present text, will bring 'victory to one's affairs, success in all undertakings.'"

Each image is accompanied by a "grade," ranging from evil (*asubham*; e.g. a burgled house, families of dogs or monkeys) and undesirable (*neshta*; e.g. a poor man), to good (*subham*; e.g. cows in a byre), excellent (*srestha*; e.g. a yogi in a hermitage, a king enthroned), or the best of all (*utamam*; e.g. winged elephant, lions, a pride of lions).

The *Sakunavali* is quite a unique commission among paintings from Udaipur. Its patron, Sangram Singh II (r. 1710-34) gave the royal ateliers unprecedented freedom in which to widen the scope of their narrative imagination. According to Topsfield, this resulted in a "substantial reinvigoration of the stagnant tradition of manuscript illustration," thus resulting in the wonderfully inventive and original series we see here (*ibid*, p. 141).

Many of the dispersed folios from this 1720-Udaipur set appear to have had their folio numbers and dream grade ratings removed, as apparent in the present group. Other examples from the same set, also with rubbed out grade ratings, appear in B.N. Goswamy & Caron Smith, *Domains of Wonder*, San Diego Museum of Art, cat. 31 and the aforementioned Topsfield scholarship.

28

Four Cats

Opaque pigments on paper

Image: 9 x 5 1/8 in. (25 x 13 cm.)

Folio: 10 1/8 x 8 3/8 in. (25.8 x 21.4 cm.)

Provenance:

Private European collection.

Inscribed in Sanskrit:

Unpreventable obstructions, always,

Pride and futility,

Sorrow and discord,

All this is indicated by a cat.

(translation by Dr. Harsha Dehejia)

The present painting depicts four cats against a flat green background. The cats appear to be different breeds, one a pure snow white with a bushy tail, another speckled gray with a striped tail, and yet another a soft chestnut brown—all adorned in golden collars. While three of the cats lounge, one struts across the unlucky viewers path. Seeing a group of felines such as this is a *neshta* (bad) omen, and for the superstitious—grounds to cancel any upcoming journeys.

॥ सदा विद्यमनिर्वाण ॥-आरंभं च निरर्थकं ॥ शोकं च विग्रहं चैव ॥
॥ मां जारेण विनिर्दिशेत् ॥ ॥



The Boar

Opaque pigments on paper

Image: 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 7 in. (22.2 x 17.8 cm.)

Folio: 10 x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (25.5 x 21.6 cm.)

Provenance:

Christie's London, 12 June 2018, lot 28 .

Christie's Amsterdam, 12 October 1993, lot 34.

Exhibited:

"Indian Miniature Paintings" c.1590–c.1850, Amsterdam, 1 October–30 November 1987, no.23.

Literature:

J. Bautze, *Indian Miniature Paintings c.1590–c.1850*, exhibition catalogue, Amsterdam, 1987, no.23, p.61.

Inscribed in Sanskrit:

Loss of property, mental anguish,

Death of sons, terrible fear,

Death, sorrow, suffering:

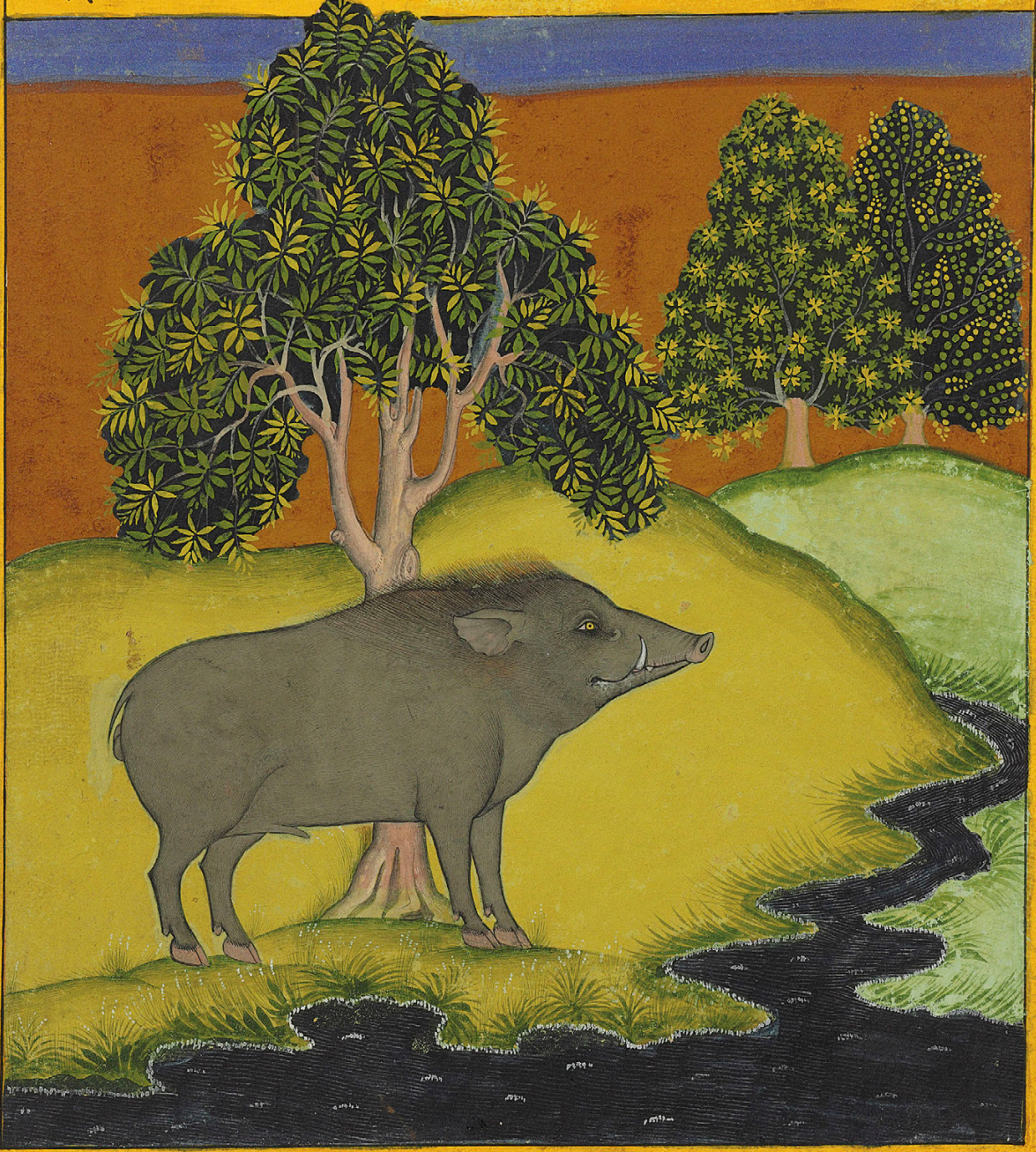
A boar indicates all this.

(translation by Dr. Harsha Dehejia)

The present image depicts a lone boar, standing at the river's edge. Its finely rendered hair and almost human eyes belie a robust figure with dangerously pointed tusks. The rust colored sky creates an ominous air—a sense of danger. According to the *Sakunavali*, the boar, categorized as 'neshta,' is an ill omen.

The rendering of the landscape, with the river's zig-zagging indentation of the foreground, and the differentiated colored background in rust and blue, are conventions of the Sangram Singh period. Compare the treatment of the water's edge to a folio from the Sat Sai, produced in the same workshop (see A. Topsfield, *Court Painting at Udaipur Art under the Patronage of the Maharanas of Mewar*, Zurich, 2002, p. 144, fig. 116).

॥ अर्थ नाशं मनस्तापं ॥ सुत नाशं महाभयं ॥ मर एंशो क संतापं ॥
॥ शूकरेण विनिर्दिशेत् ॥



Lord Kubera

Opaque pigments on paper

Image: 8 ¾ x 7 in. (22.2 x 17.8 cm.)

Folio: 10 x 8 ½ in. (25.5 x 21.6 cm.)

Provenance:

Private European collection.

The present painting depicts the god of wealth, Lord Kubera, adorned with jewels and holding a golden *gada*. He sits upon a magical flying chariot with the head of a *hamsa* bird, the *Pushpaka Vimana*. According to the *Ramayana*, the Kubera was once the king of Lanka, the legendary demon fortress located in the towering peaks of the Trikuta Mountains. His brother Ravana, however, overthrew the great king and took the *Pushpaka Vimana* for his own. The mythical chariot was eventually returned to Kubera by the hero Rama.

The Sanskrit inscription on the recto on the present folio reads:

*Health and pleasure,
A place of gathering for worship,
The benefit of a son's birth and a life of comfort:
The Lord of Wealth, Kubera, indicates all this.*

(translation by Dr. Harsha Dehejia)

Another folio from this set, which resides in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, resembles this one closely. The LACMA folio depicts Chandra, the moon god, who rides a flying chariot carried by a stag (Pal, Pratapaditya, *The Classical Tradition in Rajput Painting*, New York, 1978, cat. 30). Both these folios are likely graded *uttamam*, which is the most auspicious type of omen; however, because the inscriptions have been rubbed out we cannot be sure.

See alternative imaginings of the *Pushpaka Vimana* in five folios from a Mewari *Ramayana* series published in J.P. Losty, *The Ramayana: Love and Valor in India's Great Epic*, London, 2008, plates 118-122. Therein the chariot is carried by four *hamsa* birds rather than the bird and chariot being one and the same.

॥ आरोग्यं च प्रमोदं च ॥ स्थानं ह्यजासमागमं ॥ पुत्रलाभं सदा सौ
॥ ख्यं ॥ धनं देवविनिर्दिशेत् ॥ ॥ ॥



Bahubali**Karnataka, 15th century***Brass**13 ¾ in. (34.9 cm.) high***Provenance:**

With Kapoor Galleries since the 1990s.

The present figure depicts Bahubali, an important subject in Jain art. According to legend, Bahubali was born the second son to Rishabhanatha and queen Sunanda. In a battle of succession, their first son Bharata demanded homage from his 99 other brothers, all of whom renounced their worldly claims, apart from Bahubali. When the two brothers entered into battle, just as Bahubali was about to strike his winning blow, he realized the futility of his worldly existence and ceased fighting.

Renouncing violence and pride, Bahubali became a monk, plucking out his hair and abandoning all worldly attachments including his clothes. In a performance of penance, Bahubali meditated in 'body-abandonment' posture in the forest, allowing birds to roost on his head and vines to creep up his body. After a year of fasting and meditation, Bahubali became the first human of this world-age to attain liberation.

This brass sculpture is from Karnataka, where a 65-foot high statue of the figure built in 983 A.D. stands at Shravanabelagola. The present fifteenth-century bronze displays the same iconography, with equally pleasing proportions and a soft meditative countenance.



**Leaf from a *Panch Kalyanaka* series:
Prince Shreyans Achieves *Jati-smaran Gyan***

Rajasthan, Amber, 1720 - 1750

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 9 x 15 in. (22.8 x 38.1 cm.)

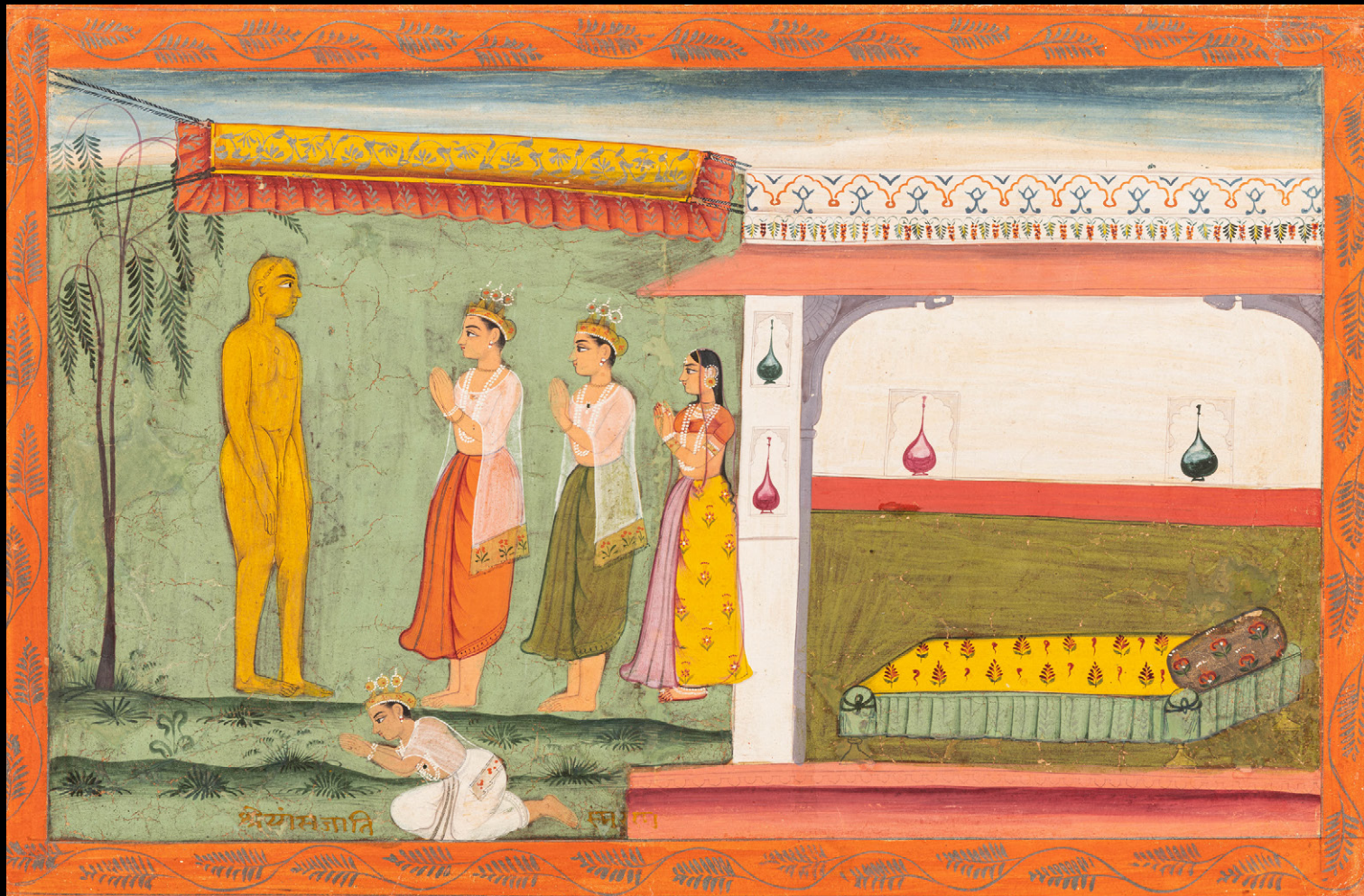
Folio: 10 ½ x 16 ½ in. (26.6 x 41.9 cm.)

The present image illustrates a Jain text which describes the five auspicious events that occurred in the life of Rishabhanatha, the first Jain tirthankara. Rishabhanatha, with a golden complexion, appears here nude, typical of priests from the Digambara ('sky-clad') order. Standing against a flat green background, he is depicted proportionally larger than the worshippers, using hierarchical scale to denote his dignity and importance. The three standing figures are royalty, as indicated by their crowns, yet they hold their hands together in prayer as they stand outside of the palace, modestly awaiting an audience with the austere priest. Below them, dressed in white, is Shreyans who bows in awe and reverence upon seeing the monk.

The inscription on either side of the kneeling figure, which reads "Shreyans Jati," denotes this particular scene as one in which prince Shreyans Kumar (grandson of Bahubali, and great grandson of Rishabhanatha) rushes to meet his great grandfather. Thousands of other citizens also come bearing gifts of gold and jewels, but Rishabhanatha doesn't even cast a glance at their offerings, as he has completely renounced worldly possessions. Living as a monk, Rishabhanatha wandered under a vow of silence, asking for nothing and only eating when offered.

When Shreyans bows down at the ascetic's feet, he looks up at Rishabhanatha and finds that he can no longer shift his gaze. Shreyans then immediately acquires *Jati-smaran Gyan*, the knowledge that opens up memories of past births, and realizes that the monk had been wandering for some time without food or water. This moves Shreyans to offer the monk fresh sugar cane juice and beg him to break his fast. Rishabhanatha accepts his request and calls out, "Hail the alms giving."

This leaf likely follows another from the same set in the Norton Simon Museum, published by Dr. Pal in *Painted Poems* (Pal 2004., 20-21, cat. 3). Several other leaves from this *Panch Kalyanaka* series have appeared in public collections, including two leaves in the San Diego Museum Art (accession nos. 1990.0213 and 1990.0214), and a leaf in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (M.74.102.4; Pal 1981, 28-29, no.15). Leaves from this series are primarily identified by their prominent orange border with a meandering vine motif.



A Digambara Jina

Karnataka or Tamil Nadu, 9th century

Copper alloy

17 ½ in. (44.4 cm.) high

Provenance:

The collection of Mrs. Juliann B. Hermann, acquired in New York by 1969.

Thence by descent.

The immutable nature of this figure's mental and spiritual state is captured by the symmetry and stillness of his posture. The great physical strength conveyed is required to practice Jain austerities and to achieve omniscience. To become a *tirthankara* one must embody all forms of proper ethical behavior without striving to become such. One must eliminate all negative karma and attain omniscience through pure-intentioned and egoless striving to realize the five essential Jain virtues: non-violence, truth, non-stealing, chastity, and non-attachment. Complete freedom from passion and anger is the perpetual state of the 'ford-crosser' or *tirthankara* also known as a 'jina' or 'conqueror.'

The present figure is depicted naked or "sky-clad", in austerity meditation, *kayotsarga*, or the posture of 'body-abandonment,' pointing to its sectarian association with the Digambara tradition of Jainism, which strongly embraces asceticism and became concentrated in the southern regions. In the south, Jains enjoyed the committed patronage of Kings, royal families, and common people. The early Pandyas of Madurai; the Kalabhra dynasty of third to sixth centuries; the Pallavas of the third to the beginning of the tenth centuries; and the Chola rulers of the ninth through fourteenth centuries, all supported the construction of Jain temples and the creation of Jain images throughout Tamil Nadu. The Chalukya rulers of the sixth to eighth centuries; the Rashtrakuta rulers of the eighth through tenth centuries; and the Hoysala rulers of the eleventh through fourteenth centuries did the same in the nearby state of Karnataka.

A bronze image of this size was likely created for a temple in Karnataka or Tamil Nadu. Though it is without a bronze base in its current state, its seventeen-inch height is indicative of the context for which it was created and the full form it once took. Scholarship on extant bronzes suggest that Jains were the likely pioneers in creating metal icons in India. The lost-wax casting technique utilized to create this sculpture was, for instance, used to create a late-third-century figure of Jina Rishabhanatha found in Chausa village in Bihar (which currently resides in the Patna Museum). While high-copper-content alloys were used in the southern



regions, bright brass became popular in the northern regions from the ninth century onward (see Pal, *The Peaceful Liberators*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1994, p. 24-25).

The present figure is cast in the high-copper-content alloy which typically transforms into the dark, rich, greenish patina we see today. This material quality and several stylistic features evidence that this figure originated in one of the southern states of Karnataka or Tamil Nadu under the Rastrakuta or Chola dynasties. Snail-curved hair, crescent-shaped brows over wide eyes, pronounced noses, and distended earlobes, are features that were common to Jina images of the ninth century. This idealized human image is often endowed with soft sloping shoulders, tubular arms, an attenuated waist, and a fleshy abdomen such as the present. An earlier image of Tirthankara Suparsvanatha protected by a five-headed *naga* attributed to Tamil Nadu at the Harvard Art Museum (acc. 2012.193), however, displays a similarly placed *shrivasta*—a celestial mark that is typically placed between the breasts—which may be unique to *jina* images originating in the Tamil region.



Illustration to the *Ashta Nayika*: *Abhisandhita Nayika*

Kangra, late 19th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 8 ¼ x 11 ⅞ in. (21 x 30.2 cm.)

Folio: 10 ½ x 14 ⅛ in. (26.7 x 35.9 cm.)

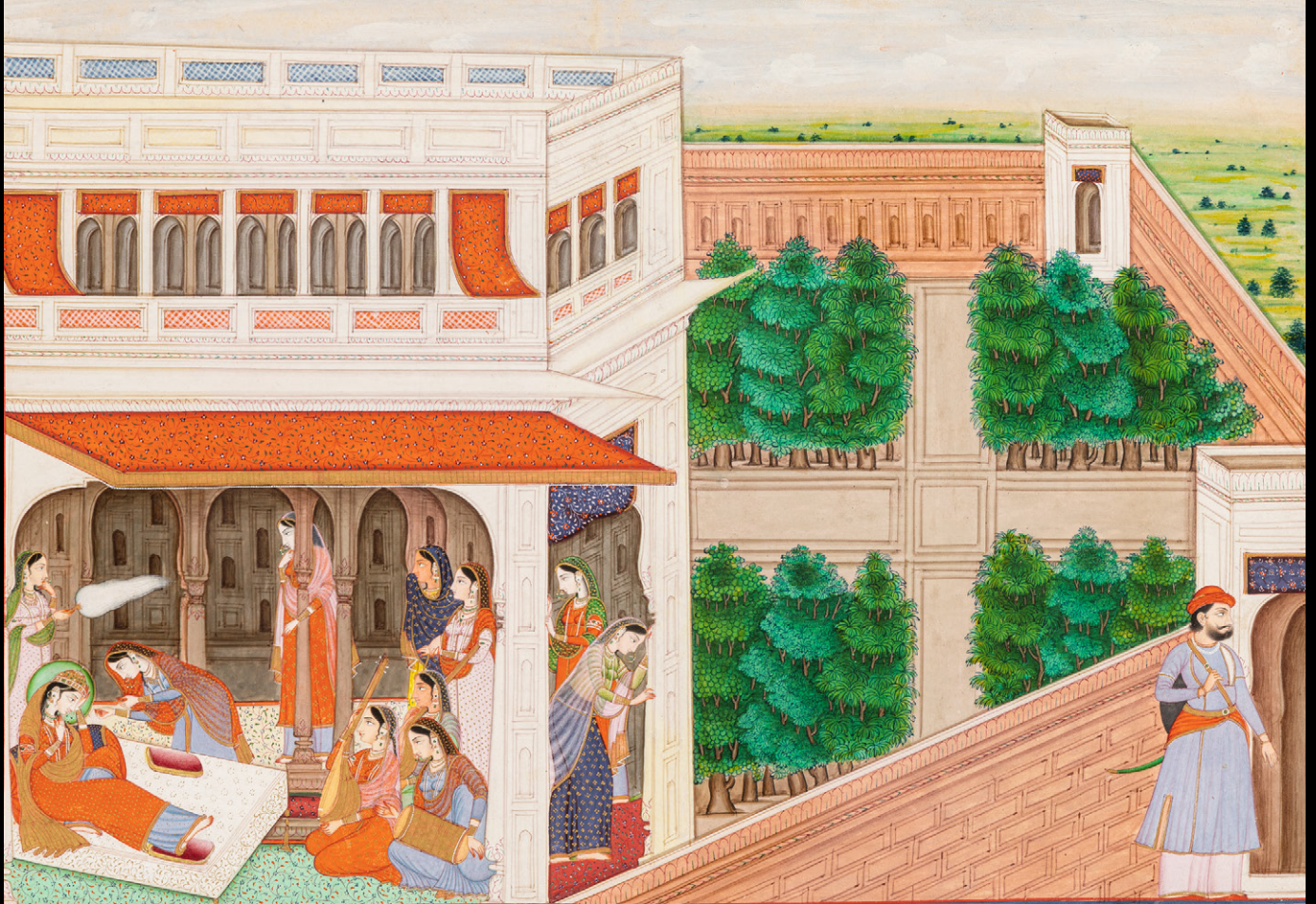
Abhisandhita Nayika, the dejected lover, is she who is estranged by a quarrel. Overcome with pride, this heroine rejects her beloved and disregards his devotion despite his apologies. Unable to soften her anger, he departs. Her indifference is but a facade, though, and in his absence she burns with remorse. The result is *vipralambha mana*, love in separation on account of pride, representing the intrusion of the ego between the soul and Brahman. Hindi poet Keshav Das describes *mana* as the feeling of pride incited by love.

The distraught *nayika* sits in the bottom left corner, her face full of sorrow. Her *sakhi* consoles her while musicians attempt to comfort her with soothing music. Her beloved appears with his back turned at the opposite side of the painting, solemnly leaving the palace.

Much of the composition features complex architectural elements, including a lush courtyard housing detailed foliage of various shades of green. Such verdant greenery and precise architectural detail are characteristic of nineteenth-century Kangra painting, as is the pastel palette and soft, clean lines.

Depictions of love in all its forms were popular subjects in Kangra painting. These artists incorporated many fine aspects of Mughal painting, producing a style characterized by brilliant colors, rhythmic line drawings, and extreme attention to detail. The current example leaves the viewer not only with a sense of the impeccable artistry of the Kangra painters but also with an overwhelming feeling of romance and all the trials that come with it.

For another depiction of this subject from late nineteenth century Kangra, see the *Abhisandhita Nayika* in the collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, London (acc. IS.40-1949).



Ganesha Enthroned

Kangra, first half of the 19th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

10 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 11 in. (27.2 x 28 cm.)

The bestower of good fortune, remover of obstacles, and god of new beginnings sits here enthroned, consuming sweets. He appears at ease, his gaze as relaxed as his posture, encouraging his snake to take part in the snack. The *tilaka* and crescent moon which grace the divine elephant-headed god's temple are marks of his divinity and transcendent knowledge. He is attended to by two lavishly dressed women in full jewelry sets and layered textiles in hues that create continuity in the palette and connect the attendants to their object of veneration. Playful patterns and bright colors give great vibrancy to this miniature painting of the widely adored god, Ganesha.



Dancing Ganesha

Central India, Madhya Pradesh, 10th century

Sandstone

21 x 15 ½ x 7 ¾ in. (53.3 x 39.4 x 19.7 cm.)

Provenance:

With Jean-Claude Moreau-Gobard by the 1960s.

Faithful attendants surround Ganesha expressing his role as patron of the arts in a dance echoing that of his father Shiva. He sways atop a platform supported by two lions who flank a devotee seated in prayer. Stacked rows of attendants with offerings and praise take the place of columns and enshrine the god along with the assembly of lotus-bearing male figures above. The mouths of *makara* on either side of the male figures release scrolling tree-like embellishments, mirroring the movement of the snake's curling head and tail which Ganesha stretches overhead.

This deep sandstone relief of the elephant-headed god filled with figures ornamented in large beads and clad with striped dhotis is rendered in a style common to medieval sculptures from central India. The present form of Ganesha, albeit petite in comparison, is worthy of studying beside a fine tenth-century image of Ganesha attributed to Madhya Pradesh at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 2007.480.2); see similarities in the design of his jeweled headdress and manner of depicting the god's voluminous ears.



**Folio from an *Usha-Aniruddha* series:
Chitrlekha Visits Aniruddha in Dwarka**

Garhwal, circa 1840

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

9 x 12 in. (22.9 x 30.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Private European collection.

The present painting comes from an *Usha-Aniruddha* romance series in which Usha, daughter of Vana, King of the Daityas, has a dream of a wonderfully handsome prince with whom she instantly falls in love. Usha, calling upon her friend, the magical Chitrlekha, speaks thus, "Listen carefully my friend. My husband is very attractive, his eyes are beautiful like a lotus, his gait is gracious like that of an elephant. If you do not produce him before me I will die" (H. Dehejia, and V. Sharma, *Pahari Paintings of an Ancient Romance: the Love Story of Usha-Aniruddha*, New Delhi, 2011, p.28). Chitrlekha aids her in drawing portraits of all the princes until Usha recognized Aniruddha among them—the grandson of Krishna!

Here we see Chitrlekha in the holy city of Dwarka, built by the divine architect Vishwakarma. The majestic palace is made of pure gold, its columns and arches adorned with glittering jewels that sparkle like the stars in the sky. Chitrlekha, leaning against a golden arch, gazes upon the sleeping figure of Aniruddha, his princely crown beside him. When Chitrlekha awakens the prince, he explains that he too has had a dream of a beautiful romance. Thus, he agrees to accompany Chitrlekha to Usha.

Sleeping in a chamber just to the left of Aniruddha is Krishna, who has a nearly identical countenance to his grandson—the only distinguishing feature being his crown, which unlike Aniruddha's, bears his signature peacock feathers. The male figure beside him is likely a messenger, there to alert Krishna that Aniruddha has disappeared. When Krishna finds his grandson gone, he wages war on Usha's kingdom, and a great battle ensues.

See a similar folio from a Kangra *Usha-Aniruddha* series, currently in the Victoria and Albert Museum (acc. IS.11-1968). In this folio, Chitrlekha reveals her portraits to Usha and then magically flies through the sky on her way to find Aniruddha. The Garhwal and Kangra traditions are both known for their exquisite romantic charm. The present folio, however, is executed in a palette that would surely steal the eye away from a comparable pastel-colored Kangra illustration of the same subject.



Makara Bangle (Makaranathi)**India, dated 1869***Gold and rubies**Length: 8 ¼ in. (20.9 cm.)***Provenance:**

From the estate of Mary Jane Lampton Peabody
(1921-2015).





This stunning bracelet features elegant repoussé details of foliate designs and two *makara* heads with ruby eyes. The *makara* meet face-to-face at a round sphere that holds the screw fastening mechanism, also adorned with a ruby. In Hindu mythology, a *makara* is a legendary sea creature similar to a crocodile. The inside rim is inscribed “Eugénie” with crown and the year 1869. Such bangles were worn and bestowed by *rajas* and princes in south India during the nineteenth century. Compare the present piece with a similar nineteenth-century gold bangle in the collections of the Victoria & Albert Museum in London (acc. 03291(IS)).

It is likely that this bangle belonged to Eugénie de Montijo, wife of Napoleon III and the last French empress. She was at the forefront of contemporary fashion and enjoyed wearing jewelry, adorning herself with surviving pieces of the crown jewels as well as new pieces commissioned during her reign. Eugénie was also known to have a love for India—as a young girl, she even attempted to run away to India, going as far as climbing aboard a ship at Bristol docks. Whether this gift was inspired by her youthful eccentricities, or simply French colonial interests in India, we cannot know.

After France’s defeat in the Franco-Prussian war and the overthrow of the Second Empire in 1871, the empress and her husband fled to England. In a noble gesture, she left the jewels that were paid for by the state behind, but kept some of her personal favorites. Likely pressed for funds, Eugénie sold a number of pieces from her collection at Christie’s London the following year. Additionally, in 1887, the Third Republic sold the French crown jewels at auction, dispersing the pieces they labeled as frivolous. Today, some are on display at the Louvre and others appear occasionally at auctions, although many were sold privately or have never been recovered.



Seated Nobleman on a Terrace

Attributed to Pandit Seu and his family workshop, Guler, late 18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 7 1/8 x 5 3/8 in. (18.2 x 13.6 cm.)

Folio: 11 1/2 x 7 7/8 in. (29.1 x 20.1 cm.)

Provenance:

Christie's New York, 20 March 2019, lot 713.

A nobleman in a vivid green *jama* with an elaborate floral and jeweled belt, necklaces of rubies, emeralds and pearls that match his embellished turban surmounted by a feathered *sarpech*, appears dignified atop a white marble terrace. He relaxes before an elaborate drawstring bolster atop lavish textiles as he holds the end of a hookah, before which a heated vessel sits emitting wisps of smoke. The elegant composition is worthy of close comparison to a figure in the same posture, garb and environment as the present nobleman, attributed to the master painter Nainsukh: a drawing of Mir Mannu in the Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh (acc. no. B-60), illustrated by B.N. Goswamy in *Nainsukh of Guler*, Zurich, 1997, pp. 102-103, no. 27.

Since Akbar's time, the Mughal Empire exerted suzerainty over the small principalities within the rich landscape of the Punjab Hills. The present painting is a result of that influence, as it was very likely painted from an imperial Mughal model. The painting is, nevertheless, of the highest quality and thus attributed to the famed atelier of Pandit Seu of Guler—an artist who credited with aiding in the shift to a more formal style with the transmission of Mughal techniques learned directly from disbanded artists from Aurungzeb's former atelier.



Women Drawing Water from a Well

Mughal, 18th century

Ink and opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 8 ½ x 5 ⅛ in. (20.5 x 13 cm.)

Provenance:

George Halla, Czech Republic consul to New South Wales, 1948.

Thence by descent.

Private collection, Sydney.

The present painting depicts a bustling scene at a village water well. Women busily go about their daily tasks, transporting water in large clay pots—one carries two at the same time, precariously balancing one atop her head. Another heaves water up from the well, the sturdy rope pooling at her feet. The central figure is dressed in purple and gold with bright red cuffs that contrast the muted tones of her surroundings. She modestly pulls her veil to cover her bosom as she gazes down at the young man, his hand outstretched to accept the offering of water she pours from a brass vessel in her right hand. The man, bare chested and simply dressed in a grass skirt, is eclipsed by a man much more richly clad. Likely a prince or a nobleman, he wears a white *jama* and a red turban and carries a whole armory, complete with a double ended spear, *katar*, sword, and shield.

Scenes of women at watering wells—a popular subject in eighteenth-century Mughal paintings—were likely inspired by literary sources such as the Persian poet Muhammad Akrim's story of Mohna Rani and Chel Batao and Ghanimat Kunjahi's 1785 *Nairangi 'Ishq*. This scene is reminiscent of one from the *Nairangi 'Ishq* ('Love's Magic') in which the protagonist Sahid goes hunting and comes across a village well where he meets the eyes of a beautiful woman, Wafa, and instantly falls in love. The present painting is worthy of comparison to a seventeenth-century Mughal painting of "A Group of Women at a Well" in the Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art (acc. F1907.208). Both these illustrations exhibit the same delicately rendered form and attention to the naturalistic landscape seen in the present painting which is characteristic of Mughal paintings of the period.









Women in the Zenana

Mughal, 17th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

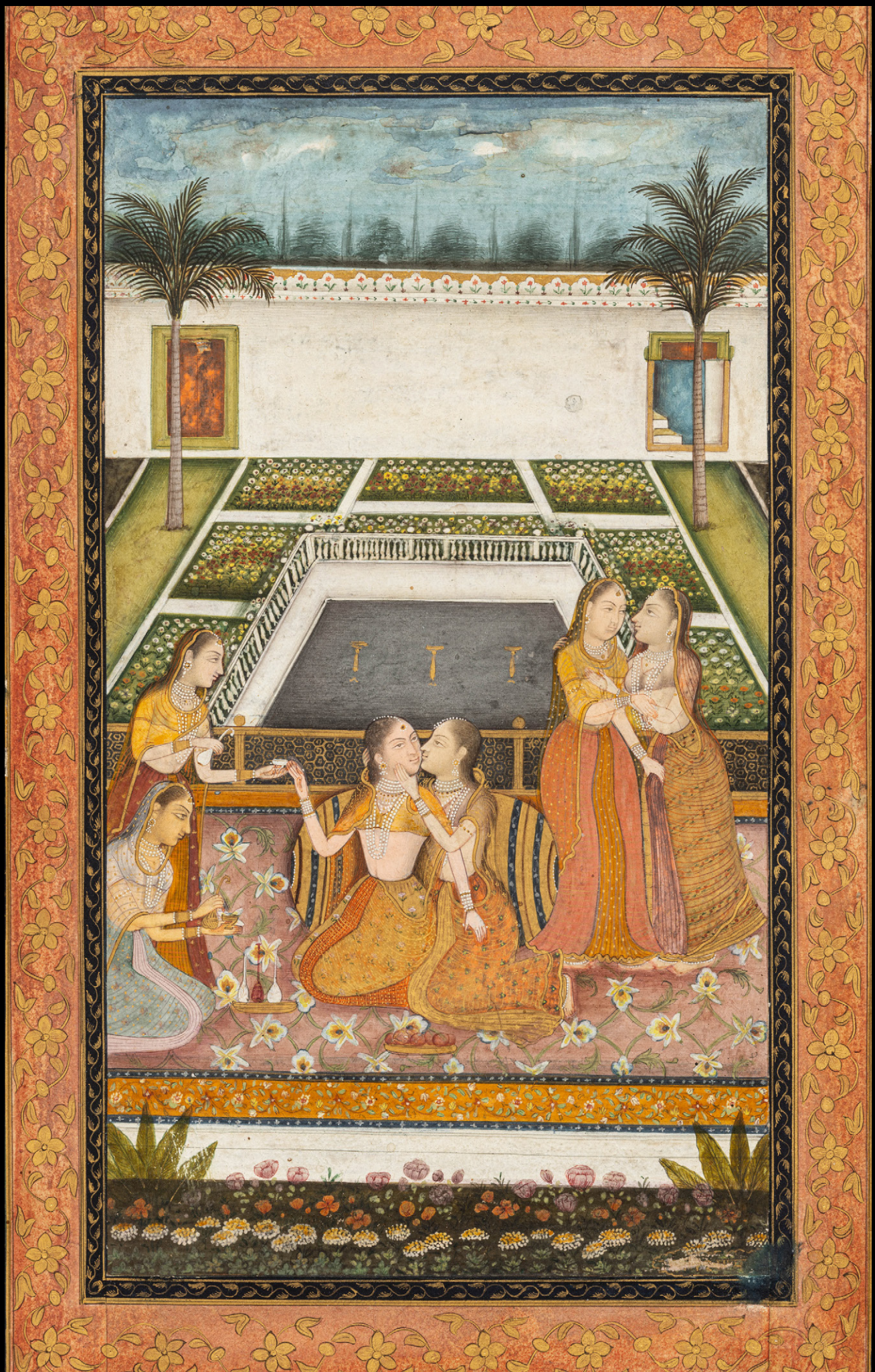
Image: 9 x 5 in. (22.5 x 12.5 cm.)

Folio: 11 ¾ x 7 ½ in. (30 x 19 cm.)

Outside in the secluded terrace garden, the women of the zenana are coupled in loving embrace. One of the seated figures turns towards the viewer as her female lover pulls her in for a kiss. Reclining on a large cushion, her gaze invites the eye into the scene as an attendant refills her cup. Beside them, two standing women gaze into each other's eyes as they lavish one another in soft caresses. One clutches at her partner's skirt, pulling her close as the attendant gazes at them from across the terrace. Dressed in translucent golden veils and strings of delicate pearls, the women are served never-ending drinks and platters of ripe, plump fruit.

The repetition of the floral motif—from the formal garden and the wild growths in the lower register, to the intricate terrace flooring and the delicate molding of the palace walls—denote the zenana as the feminine domain, filled with women in full bloom. Amorous zenana scenes such as in the present painting found their initial imperial expression during the reign of Shah Jahan (r. 1627-1658). The harems' sumptuous attire and leisurely pursuit of pleasure speaks to the prosperity of the realm and provides a window into the fantasies of the male artists and their patrons. Due to the inaccessibility of the zenana and the speculated delights therein, these imaginings of the women "behind-the-wall" were archetypal and highly idealized depictions, rather than individualized portraits.

The present scene most likely comes from a *Ragamala* series as evidenced by its similarities to two other *Ragamala* folios depicting women in the zenana. See a circa-1760 set attributed to Hyderabad (see Falk and Archer, *Indian Miniatures in the India Office Library*, London, 1981, no. 426vi, p. 508) as well as a folio in the Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 1005068.j).



Aurangzeb in Court

Pahari, probably Bilaspur, mid-18th century

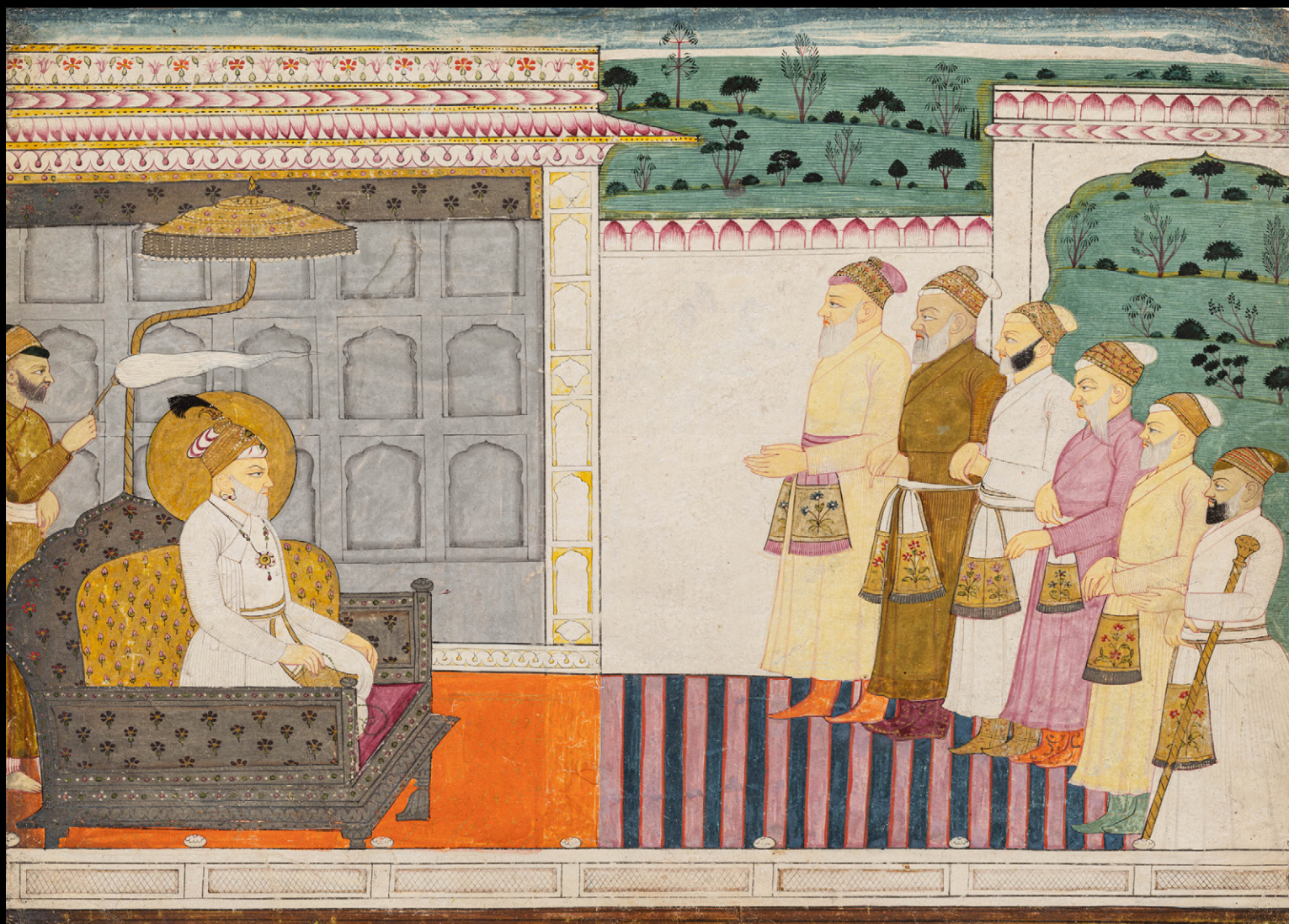
Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

8 ½ x 11 ¾ in. (21.6 x 29.8 cm.)

A nimbate Mughal ruler, likely a stylized image of Emperor Aurangzeb, is shown seated on a silver throne, leaning against a golden floral bolster as he gives audience to a delegation of six gray-bearded Muslim ministers who stand before him respectfully, perhaps seeking appointments as governors or envoys. The scene evokes cold overtones, as it is most likely winter-time in the Punjab Hills. The figures can be discerned as Muslims by their long winter jamas which are tied to the right (unlike Hindus who tie to the left), the style of their boots and the manner of their neatly trimmed beards. The emperor is seated on the terrace of an outdoor pavilion, beneath a golden parasol, handling a strand of prayer beads while an attendant stands behind him waving a flowing *chowrie*.

Several features of this work are indicators of a Bilaspur origin: the overall color palette with its flattened darkish green-blue landscape accentuated by short parallel strokes of dark green ground; the patterned lines of trees and small bushes throughout the landscape; and the prominent striped rug beneath the feet of the subjects. Moreover, the painting is composed in a *pothi* (horizontal) format.

The work is uninscribed so one cannot be sure of the figures' identities. However, their faces, defined with individualizing features and distinctive beards, are painted with Mughal naturalism, leaving open the possibility of future identification. The characters serve as representations of real individuals rather than idealized types.



Baz Bahadur and Rupmati Riding at Night

Mughal, probably Awadh, circa 1800

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 7 ¾ x 10 ½ in. (19.7 x 25.7 cm.)

Folio: 8 ¾ x 10 7/8 in. (21.2 x 27.6 cm.)

Provenance:

The Ehrenfeld Collection, California.

Sotheby's New York, 6 October 1990, lot 19.

Carlton Rochell Asian Art, New York.

The Sterling Collection, U.S., 2011.

Published:

Daniel J. Ehn bom, *Indian Miniatures: The Ehrenfeld Collection*, New York, 1985, no. 30, pp. 76-77.

Baz Bahadur of Mandu, the last King of the Malwa Sultanate (r. 1555-1562), is depicted here riding with his beloved Rupmati on a pair of horses. They gallop in sync through the darkened night landscape, rearing up in perfect unison as the lovers gaze into each other's eyes. They seem to glow with an otherworldly radiance, their energy illuminating the green bush behind them like a spotlight stage. A lotus-filled pond with a pair of birds bathing is depicted below.

Although the Muslim Baz Bahadur and the Hindu Rupmati were historic figures who lived and loved during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, their inspiring story has transcended into folklore and poetry. Baz Bahadur was initially led to Rupmati by music he heard on a hunt. After years of palatial and romantic bliss, the two were divided by the 1661 Mughal conquest of Mandu, whereupon Rupmati chose death over being taken captive. Thus, they are the archetypal tragic lovers—an Indian version of Romeo and Juliet—and are represented here in this stunning miniature as idealized types, raised to heroic perfection.

While it is apparent that these are not actual portraits, we can nevertheless immediately recognize them as Baz and Rupmati with the help of longstanding visual conventions associated with their story: Baz Bahadur bears a long spear, two quivers of arrows, a bow, and a sword. Their eyes meet as their caparisoned horses lift them in a united stride.







Maharaja Abhai Singh Receiving Thakur Bhandari Girdhar Das Jodhpur, circa 1725-1735

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

12 ¼ x 9 ¾ in. (31.1 x 24.8 cm.)

Provenance:

The collection of Robert O. Muller.

Christie's New York, 14 September 2010, lot 203.

Published:

Rosemary Crill, *Marwar Painting: A History of the Jodhpur Style*, Mumbai, 2000, p. 75, fig. 46.

Maharaja Abhai Singh (b. 1702), who ruled Jodhpur from 1724 to 1749, sits here larger than life on a silver throne, holding a small ceremonial whisk and an upright sheathed sword. Two courtiers stand behind him, one waving a *morchal* (a peacock-feathered whisk) as a symbol of his royal authority. He is receiving his *thakur* (vassal) Bhandari Girghar Das, a Rathore nobleman from a Marwari *thikana* or fiefdom who kneels respectfully at his feet.

Abhai Singh sits looking blatantly up past the petitioning vassal. He is dressed in a long, brilliant orange pleated *jama* with a gold floral designed *patka* and strands of pearls and precious gems which weigh down his shoulders. His head is topped with a silk Rathore-style *pagri* that sports ornate jewels and pearls, surmounted by a fine *sarpech*, his bare feet resting on a small plinth.

The group is depicted like a frieze or still-life against the marble wall of a white pavilion with two swimming ducks and a fountain positioned below. He is depicted here in his full majesty and authority—still a relatively young man, probably in his late twenties.



A Ram's Head Shamshir

Northeastern India, Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow, 19th Century

18 in. (47.7 cm.) high

Provenance:

Acquired on the UK art market.

The *shamshir's* name comes from the radical curve of its blade, translating to 'lion's claw' or 'lion's tail.' The blade itself is forged from wootz steel; the carbon deposits within the iron ingots forming intricate wave-like patterns known as 'damascus.' A modern scabbard of tooled black leather, attached with shell-shaped brackets for suspension, accompanies the sword.

The present shamshir is a beautiful example of the famed silver metalware produced in Lucknow during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The diamond-shaped quillion is made from engraved silver with fine blue and green *champleve* and *basse-taille* enamelling particularly characteristic of Lucknow. In the center is a Hyderabad poppy in aquamarine blue—a distinctive motif in the Lucknow vocabulary which demonstrates the fusion of Deccani opulence and Mughal naturalism. (see Mark Zebrowski, *Gold, Silver & Bronze from Mughal India*, 1997, p. 87, pl. 74.)

Perched above is a bird in blue and cherry red, its head bowed and wings spread wide. A spiral of bristling green leaves encircles the scene, and is flanked by two birds in flight. On the border appears a quatrefoil floral pattern on a blue ground, another characteristic motif of Nawabi enamel. The quillion's tapered ends mirror the splendid offset pommel, which is formed into a ram's head. The fine etchings in the ram's fur and curling horns shine through the vibrant blue and orange enamel, contrasting the animal's brilliant silver smile. The grip—extending as if the curving neck of the ram—is made of translucent rock crystal, secured to the tang with small pins.

Compare the present example to another fine ram's head shamshir from Lucknow currently housed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 36.25.1302a, b). The scabbard exhibits similar enameled metal work motifs such as the Hyderabad poppy, the scrolling green foliage, and the quatrefoil floral border.



Rao Bishan Singh Watching an Elephant Fight

Bundi, circa 1804-1821

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

14 ½ x 12 ¾ in. (36.8 x 32.4 cm.)

Provenance:

Private European collection.

From an observation tower in the upper right portion of the illustration, Rao Raja Bishan Singh watches a pair of elephants in combat. A hectic scene unfolds below him as the mahout seated atop one of the attacking elephants struggles to control the crazed animal. Handlers holding spears and forked blades scatter for their lives as the elephants clash together, their bells and streamers flying. The dynamic composition, accentuated by the diagonal lines of the architecture and tumbling elephants, creates a sense of drama as the violent battle ensues.

During his travels to India, the French physician François Bernier (1620-1688), gave an account of elephant combat that speaks to the intensity captured in the present painting:

“A wall of earth is raised three or four feet wide and five or six [feet] high. The two ponderous beasts meet one another face to face on the opposite sides of the wall... The riders animate the elephants either by soothing words, or by chiding them as cowards, and urge them on with their heels, until the poor creatures approach the wall and are brought to the attack. The shock is tremendous and it appears surprising that they should even survive the dreadful wounds and blows inflicted with their teeth, their heads, and their trunks. There are frequent pauses during the fight; it is suspended and renewed, and the mud wall being at length thrown down, the stronger more courageous elephant passes on and attacks his opponent and, putting him to flight, pursues and fastens on him with such obstinacy that the animals can be separated only by means of cherkys, or fireworks, which are made to explode between them.”



राय राजा विश्व सिंह जी

A Maiden Approaches a Nobleman

Kishangarh, circa 1740

Ink drawing with opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

10 ½ x 8 ¼ in. (26.7 x 21 cm.)

Provenance:

Doris Wiener Gallery, New York, inventory no. 43439.

Dorothy and Alfred Siesel, Washington, D.C., acquired from the above 14 December 1976.

A naturalistically depicted elder nobleman seated against a bolster puffs from the metal tip of a winding hookah stem, his eyes half shut with a sheathed sword and shield laid out before him. A beautiful young maiden looks intently out from behind a screen, coyly hiding part of her body as if trying to be careful not to be seen. Her angular face with its pointed nose and chin, pursed mouth, almond-shaped eye and high brow, and black hair tied back with three curls placed over her cheek are reminiscent of Bani Thani—a poetess and courtesan, considered the epitome of idealized Kishangarh beauty.

The scene could be the old man's intoxicated dream; a glimpse into the memory of a past love, now elevated to perfection in the noble's thoughts. Conversely, the maiden could be taking the position of the archetypal seductress, a universal subject serving as a trope of the older man's desire for a youthful woman.

This is an enigmatic scene often found in paintings from Kishangarh and particularly from the period of the artist Nihal Chand (ca. 1710-1782), whose training in the Imperial Mughal workshops at Delhi helped him create a popular new style that combined Mughal naturalism with the romantic, poetic idealization beloved at Kishangarh. The signature Kishangarh style began to develop under Raj Singh (r. 1706-1748), and reached full fledged actualization under Sawant Singh (r. 1748-1764). As the present painting dates to the mid-1700s, we know it was executed under one of these rulers' reigns. As such, it is a delightful example of the evolution of Kishangarh painting during the century. This idyllic, amatory manner so-valued within the realm is well suited for the depiction of bhakti, the ecstatic longing for the divine often anthropomorphized as Radha's love for Krishna.







Shah Jahan at a Jharokha Window

Mankot or Nurpur, mid-18th century

Opaque watercolor heightened with gold on paper

Image: 8 x 5 ½ in. (20.3 x 14 cm.)

Folio: 9 x 6 in. (22.9 x 15.2 cm.)

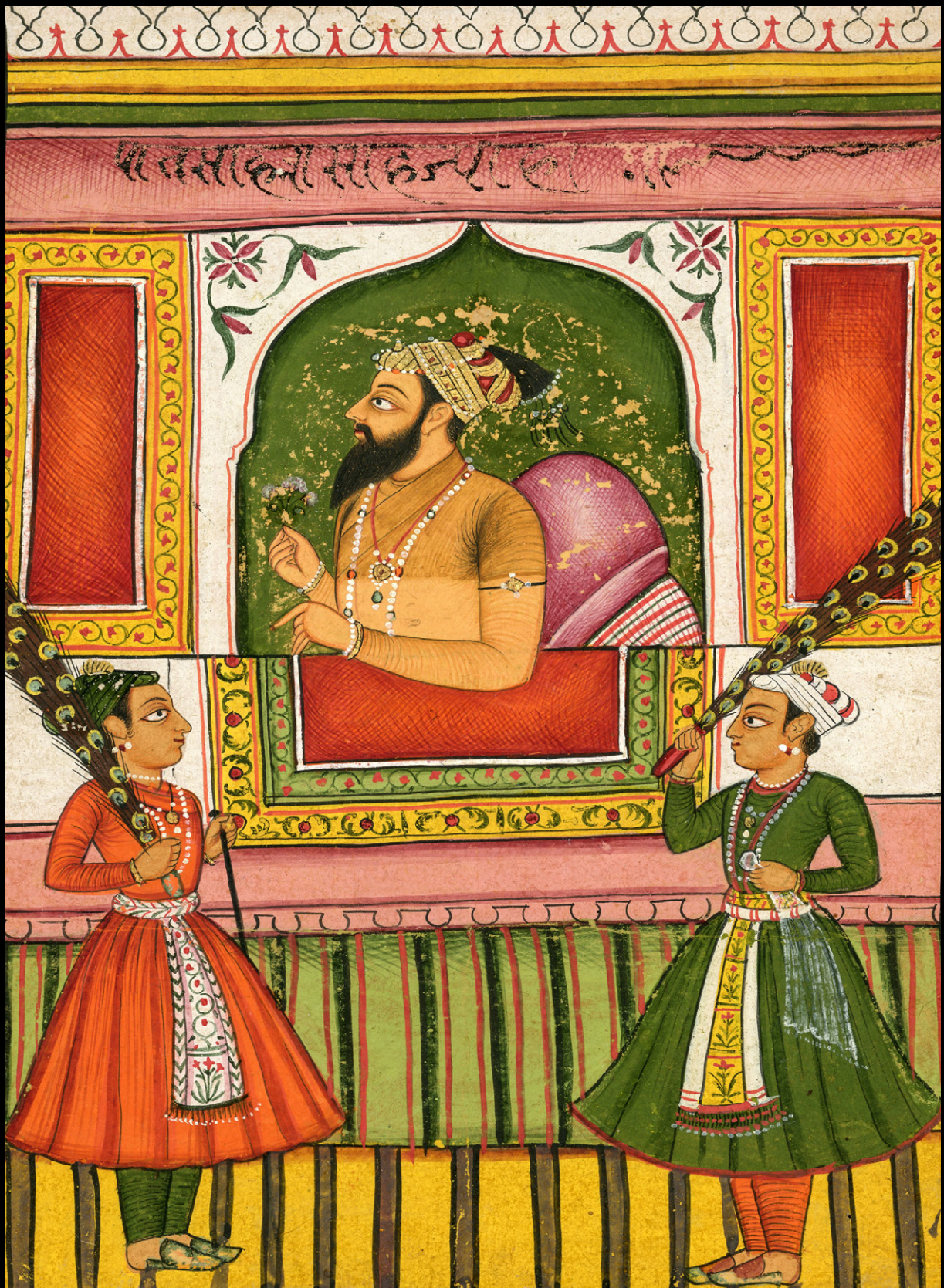
Published:

Pal, Pratapaditya, *Romance of the Taj Mahal* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art: 1989), p. 234-236, no. 254.

Emperor Shah Jahan is best known for commissioning the grand tomb of the Taj Mahal to memorialize his queen, Mumtaz Mahal, who died prematurely in 1631 from complications in childbirth. He himself was buried with her after his death in 1666.

Here, Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan sits in half-length profile at an open window, gazing upward and holding a sprig of blossoms. He wears a transparent *jama* tied to the right and a gold, pearl and jeweled Mughal *pagri* with multiple necklaces of gold, pearls and precious gems. Two attendants stand to the left and right on striped carpets, waving peacock *morchals*.

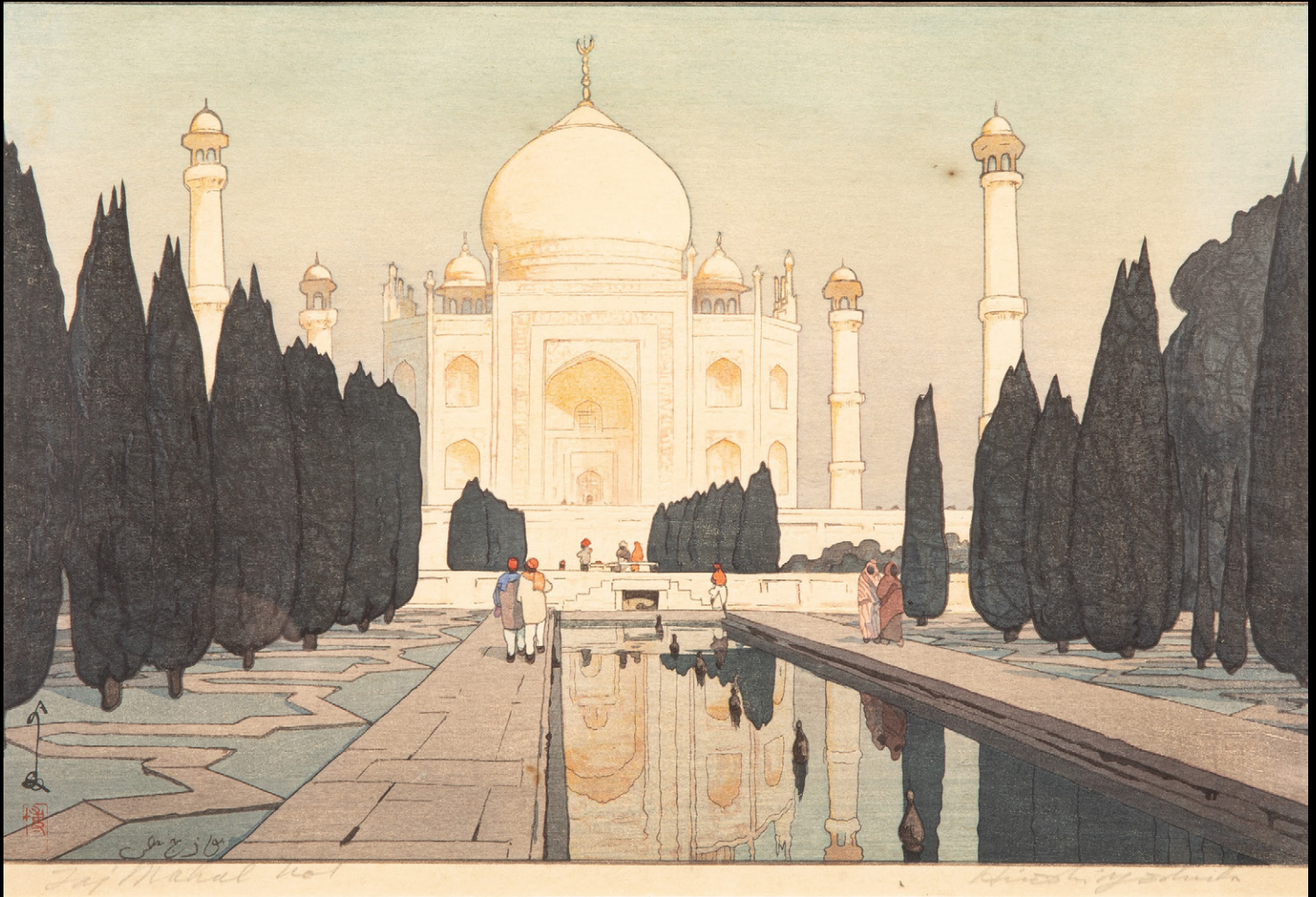
The color palette of oranges, yellows and greens as well as the broad strokes may suggest a provincial origin in the Punjab Hills, possibly from the orbit of Mankot or Nurpur, as Dr. Pal suggests. Based on execution and color palette, one may discern some influences from folkish traditions in Rajasthan as well, and possibly Sirohi given its vibrant clashing of yellows and oranges.



Print from the India and Southeast Asia series: “Taj Mahal No. 1”**Yoshida Hiroshi (1876-1950), Japan, 1931***Woodblock in colors**10 x 14 ¾ in. (25.4 x 37.5 cm.)*

Yoshida Hiroshi, one of the most popular Japanese artists of the twentieth century, was a leading figure in the *Shin Hanga* (‘New Print’) movement revitalizing *Ukiyo-e* art—a seventeenth through nineteenth-century tradition of Japanese painting and printmaking depicting the “floating world.” Among traditional earthly subjects were famous sites (*meisho*) such as the present. The Shin Hanga style, however, embraced Western conventions of art such as the rendering of directional light and realism.

When Yoshida Hiroshi visited India, he noted how captured he was by the quality of light. The Taj Mahal was, unsurprisingly, an attractive subject for the artist who was drawn to ephemeral subjects like the reflection of the magnificent marble human edifice in the pool that fills this composition’s foreground. He conveys the overwhelming size of the fantastic mausoleum at Agra with miniature figures under the main entrance and cleverly abstracts the artistically arranged Arabic letters that fill the central archway in this charming polychrome block print.



Pietra-Dura Marble Games Table

Agra, 19th century

24 ½ in. (62.2 cm.) sq; 22.5 in. (57 cm.) high

Provenance:

Sotheby's New York, 28 October 1991, lot 182.

This *pietra-dura* inlaid masterpiece from nineteenth century Agra was created with a painstaking and precise technique of stone marquetry. The elaborate inlay is reminiscent of the great Taj Mahal, with rich white marble and semiprecious stones, including serpentine, carnelian, red porphyry, breccia, granite, agate, lapis lazuli, blood-stone, onyx, jasper, and slate.





Brahma

Northwestern India, Rajasthan or Gujarat, 11th century

Marble

32 x 13 x 6 ½ in. (81.3 x 33 x 16.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Private New York collection, since the 1990s.

This rare marble relief depicts the creator god Brahma, whose four heads enable him to recite the four Vedas simultaneously. While he is not as widely worshipped as Shiva or Vishnu, those who seek knowledge pay homage to Brahma. Thus, he holds a palm-leaf book (*pustaka*) in his right hand. His remaining four hands would have held a ritual ladle (*dhruva*) representing his role as the lord of sacrificial offerings, a water pot (*kamandalu*) symbolizing his cosmic energy, and a rosary (*akshamala*) standing for his mastery of time. One day in the life of Brahma consists of one *kalpa*—or 14 *manvantara*, each of which comprises 71 *mahayuga*, while one *mahayuga* consists of four *yuga* (4,320,000 human years).

The most significant of the small number of temples dedicated to Brahma is located in Pushkar, Rajasthan, where the god defeated a demon with a lotus flower. Upon the descent of the lotus flower to earth, the ground became a sacred place. It follows that the present relief may have been made in proximity to that site, somewhere in Rajasthan. However, the god is not only represented on or inside of temples dedicated to his worship as he is an essential part of the divine Hindu triad.

A fine stele of Brahma at the British Museum (acc. 1872,0701.51) attributed to the eleventh century displays the same modeling of coiled hair mounds and a stylized beard, the overall style ornamentation, and positioning and posture of the four diminutive attendant figures at the god's feet. The medium of the present artwork, however, closely resembles that of the eleventh-century *tirthankara* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art attributed to Gujarat or Rajasthan (acc. 1992.131), where there are vast deposits of white marble.



Shiva Vinadhara

Southern India, Tamil Nadu, late Chola period, 13th-14th century

Copper alloy

32 ¼ in. (82 cm.) high

Provenance:

J.R. Pons Collection, Spain, by the 1970s.

Private American collection, acquired from the above in 1995.





Shiva stands here in a fluid *tribhanga*, donning a short *veshti* secured with a multi-banded belt punctuated at the center with a modest *kirtimukha* or ‘face of glory.’ Shiva’s face is perfectly symmetrical and equally composed in countenance as it is in modeling, conveying his transcendent power in a less explicit manner than his clearly defined third eye. He holds a battle ax (*parasu*) and a leaping antelope (*mriga*) in his upper hands symbolizing his dominance over nature. His primary hands project gracefully forward to the position where they once held his characteristic *vina*, a long-necked and pear-shaped lute.

According to Hindu practice, music has the power to lead one to *moksha* (liberation) and the present manifestation of the god Shiva embodies that notion. In his collection of poems known as *Thiruvilayadal Puranam* the Shaivite saint, Appar, describes an instance in which Shiva appears in the form of a woodcutter and plays the *vina* for one of his disciples. Therein he describes the *vina* as particularly lively and spirited among instruments for the ease with which it can be played without interruption.

While this manifestation of the god Shiva is described as ‘player of the *vina*,’ it is worthwhile to note that there is no known sculptural example including the actual instrument. This element likely would have been separately cast and, thus, its loss is consistent with the figure’s age. The energy of the music Shiva represents is, instead, conveyed through the tips of Shiva’s fingers, which are modeled in position to steer the absent instrument’s strings, and in the naturalistic sway of his hips.

This striking bronze sculpture would have been commissioned for a temple shrine, but fitted for public procession for all to experience *darshan*—a sighting of the divine, which can have a tangible impact on one’s life. The practice of creating processional bronze figures like the present began in South India in the Pallava period (75-897 CE) and continued through the Chola (848-1279) and Vijayanagara periods (1336-1646). The present figure’s circular lotus base supported by a multi-tiered square plinth became common among Chola-



period bronzes. The lugs along the base allow for the insertion of poles used to carry the image during festival processions. These practical fixtures are also present in Vijayanagara examples.

The present Shiva's hair is styled in a high *jatamukuta* (a pile of matted locks) *sans* protruding ornaments (such as a crescent moon and serpent) although decoratively elaborate. While this hairstyle appears to be a simplified expression of earlier Chola-period hairstyles with deeply defined locks and three-dimensional ornaments, a thirteenth-century bronze figure of Shiva in his manifestation as 'The Lord Who Walked With Swaying Gait' (*Vattanaigal Padanadanda Nayakar*) based on a poem by Appar from the twelfth century (Kulottunga I era), which resides within the well-known Valampuram temple of Nagapattinam, demonstrates that this style was born by the late Chola period. The undeniable likeness of the figures' narrow faces with a sharp nose and full lips suggests that the present figure may have even been modeled on the twelfth-century Valampuram Shiva. The present Shiva's robust thighs, lifted buttocks, and graceful *tribhanga* are a testament to this possibility, as limbs seem to become increasingly less naturalistic in later Vijayanagara artworks. Similarly robust thighs and nearly identical understated jewelry displayed by the present bronze, however, very closely match that of a Vijayanagara example of Shiva Chandrashekhara, which was once part of the renowned Pan-Asian collection; sold at Christie's New York, 17 March 2015, lot 34.

As such, it is safe to date the present figure to the late Chola or transitional period—a period when artists remained committed to reproducing the elegance and lifelike appearance of Hindu bronze deities that Chola artists are lauded for. The present bronze figure of Shiva is sensuous and supple, retaining the gravitas of the era.



Buddha Shakyamuni

Swat Valley, 7th-8th century

Bronze with copper inlay

3 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (9.5 cm.) high

Provenance:

Bruce Miller, San Francisco, 9 June 1976.

The James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection, Chicago.

Published:

U. von Schroeder, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, Hong Kong, 1981, p. 89. Fig 8D.

Buddha Shakyamuni displays the boon-granting gesture (*varadamudra*) with one hand and holds the end of his robe with the other as he sits cross-legged on a lotus throne. Copper-inlaid lips as well as a small circle of copper at the top of the buddha's cranial protuberance (*ushnisha*) point to the accomplished hand behind this compact figure, as do the lifelike hands which are charmingly large in proportion.

The brassy metal alloy, and manner of modeling the oval face with wide eyes and thin brows that intersect at a circular *urna*, as well as the figure's profile—upon which you can draw a straight line from the forehead to the tip of the nose—is attributable to both the Swat Valley and Kashmir. The present figure, however, was allegedly found in Afghanistan (see U. von Schroeder, *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, Hong Kong, 1981, p. 89. Fig 8D). The buddha, however, iconographically matches several preceding examples in *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes* attributed to the Swat Valley, one of which was discovered at Charbagh (see *ibid*, fig. 8B).



Bodhisattva**Swat Valley or Kashmir, 9th century***Bronze with silver and copper inlay**5 ½ in. (14 cm.) high***Provenance:**

Spink and Son, Ltd., London, 6 June 1980.

The James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection, Chicago.

Published:

P. Pal, *A Collecting Odyssey: Indian, Himalayan, and Southeast Asian Art from the James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection*, Chicago, 1997, p. 136, cat. no. 176.

Exhibited:

The Art Institute of Chicago, "A Collecting Odyssey: Indian, Himalayan, and Southeast Asian Art from the James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection," 2 August-26 October 1997, cat. no. 176.



The eight-armed *bodhisattva* with silver-inlaid eyes and pink copper lips dons an elaborate crown with a central petal resembling one side of a *vajra*. He is otherwise simply ornamented, seated in a meditative posture, holding a water pot in the lower proper-left hand and a blossoming lotus at his proper-left shoulder. He is likely a manifestation of the *bodhisattva* Lokeshvara, possibly Amoghapasha (the 'Unfailing Lasso').

The present figure comes from the Swat Valley in modern-day Pakistan. As the arts of Kashmir began to flourish under the Karkota Kings (600-855), who successfully ousted the Huns, the Swat Valley began to absorb their sophisticated bronze-casting tradition. This sculpture thus shares many qualities with Kashmiri examples such as the sophisticated metal inlay techniques and the style of the lion throne.

The throne style—a single row of lotus petals with an additional plinth supported by two front-facing lions around which a textile falls with tassels on either side—is one that became standard for the northwestern part of the Indian subcontinent for hundreds of years. The earliest iteration of this particular style in Pakistan is attributed by an inscription in Proto-Sarada to early-seventh-century Gilgit (Rubin Museum of Art, acc. C2005.37.2). The present figure, however, possesses other qualities that place it later in history.

This serene *bodhisattva*'s large silver almond-shaped eyes and long and thinly incised brows meeting at a circular *urna* are strikingly similar to that of a ninth-century figure of Maitreya from the Swat Valley published by Ulrich von Schroeder in *Indo-Tibetan Bronzes*, Hong Kong, 1981, p. 95, fig. 11H. The bronze Maitreya also features the same lion throne style and simple jewelry.

While this figure was crafted in the Swat Valley or Kashmir, the small traces of blue polychromy at the hair and cold gold at the face and neck indicate that this *bodhisattva* made its way to Tibet, where painting bronzes is customary. Moreover, it is incised with the Tibetan number "3" at the back of the throne, indicating the position of the bronze within a larger set, perhaps along with the aforementioned Maitreya.



Tara

Kashmir, 9th-10th Century

Copper alloy with silver inlay

7 ½ in. (19 cm.) high

Provenance:

Henry Spencers and Son Auctioneers, The Square, Retford, January 1996.

Paul M Peters Fine Art Ltd, Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

John Nicholson's, Haslemere, Surrey, 18 April 2018, lot 141.



The Sanskrit name ‘Tara’ is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘*tarika*’ which means ‘dilveress’ or ‘savioress.’ She first appears as an attendant to Manjushri in the *Manushrimulakalpa* and, later, as an enlightened figure in her own right, in the *Taramulakalpa* which was likely authored sometime in the seventh century. The present figure—a commanding image of the all-knowing goddess Tara—is a product of the valley of Kashmir.

A flourishing center of Buddhist learning, the people of Kashmir were great patrons of Buddhist works of art. Kashmir’s location, bordering northern India, central Asia, and the western Himalayas and its historical shaping under the Gupta and Huna peoples made it a racially and culturally diverse center for the arts. The mid-seventh-century Karkota dynasty and mid-ninth century Utpala dynasty were instrumental in disseminating Buddhist ideas and arts from Kashmir, exporting their cultural products to their neighbors. Expertly inlaid precious metals exemplified by the present figure’s three silver eyes are one of several hallmarks of a perennially exquisite style of metal sculpture born from Kashmir.

Tara’s diaphanous top is hemmed to reveal her cruciform navel in a distinctly Kashmiri fashion, decisively differentiating it from the Gupta aesthetic. Such an attenuated waist, protruding belly, and large hips are common among early images of female deities. For another example of this type, see a four-armed silver-inlaid bronze figure of Tara at the Ashmolean Museum dated to the first half of the ninth century (acc. EA2013.67). Dr. Pal describes a mode of facial representation shared among Kashmiri sculpture of the ninth century (*Bronzes of Kashmir*, New York, 1975, pl. 47), as characterized by a full face, flat nose, and less elongated eyes than earlier prototypes—qualities shared by the present bronze and the Ashmolean example. The present figure, though, shares the prominent chin of





earlier examples such as a Prajnaparamita or Sarasvati which Pal attributed to the seventh century (*The Arts of Kashmir*, Asia Society: New York, 2007, p. 94, fig. 98).

The present Tara's ornamentation, however—particularly her multi-stranded belt—closely matches that of a tenth-eleventh century wooden relief fragment depicting Tara in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 1994.488; *ibid*, p. 58, fig. 42.). While the Met example has been ascribed to Himachal Pradesh, the two modern states are known to have been historically intertwined and, thus, it is typical to see sculptures such as the aforementioned Ashmolean example attributed to “Himachal Pradesh or Jammu and Kashmir” (see P. Pal, *The Himalayas: An Aesthetic Adventure*, Chicago, 2003, p. 124, fig. 76.). The Ashmolean example, which may have originated in Kashmir, also features heavy beads and a belt with bells.

The lustrous and smooth surface of the present bronze is relevant to a likely hypothesis about its early provenance: that this fine Kashmiri bronze figure of Tara made its way to a Tibetan Buddhist shrine. For the sculpture appears not to have been ritually bathed and repeatedly cleaned nor to have been excavated from the ground, as it would if it were collected in Kashmir. As Buddhism in Kashmir waned, Kashmiri artworks such as the present remained ritually efficacious and treasured objects in the places to which they were exported. The inscription on its base, which appears to be in Sharada script, has yet to be interpreted but could reveal more about its provenance.

Vajravarahi

Tibet, Pala style, 12th century

Bronze with semi-precious inlaid stones

9 ½ in. (24 cm.) high

Provenance:

Koller, Zurich, 1986.

Sothebys, New York, March 19th, 2008, lot 301.

Private Swiss collection.

The present form of Vajrayogini, Vajravarahi or 'Dorje Phagmo' to Tibetans, is a sow-headed manifestation of the goddess, who is the principal female deity of the Chakrasamvara cycle of tantras. Vajravarahi is particularly significant within the Karma Kagyu and other Kagyu traditions wherein she serves as an important meditational deity or *yidam*. While she is a fully enlightened being who embodies buddhahood in tantric female form, she is often referred to as a dakini or *khandroma* ('sky goer') in accordance with early Indian traditions.

The goddess holds up a *kartrika* in her right hand and a *kapala* in her left. She dons a skull tiara, a necklace of pendant jewels and a heavy garland of severed heads hung on twisted rope. Her semi-wrathful expression is rendered with sharp canines emerging from the corners of her mouth. The present figure of the *dakini* is, nevertheless, elegant and poised. She dances on the toes of her left foot with her right leg slightly raised, demonstrating the lightness, space, and bliss that come along with fully realizing emptiness. Blending grace and power, the robust goddess centers her weight effortlessly on flexed toes, achieving an accomplished posture. The lifelike sow's head that identifies her projects boldly from the proper-right side of her head.

The present sculpture, cast in a beautifully-patinated metal alloy is inset with colourful semi-precious stones, inspired by the bronzes of Pala India of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, from where the cult of the deity herself originates. Compare the posture and details such as the style of the severed heads hung on twisted rope with a twelfth century Indian bronze Vajradaka published by Ulrich von Schroeder in *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*, Hong Kong, 2001, p. 295, fig. 98E.



Yaksha

Northeastern India, Pala period, 10th-11th century

Black basalt

32 x 13 x 5 ¾ in. (81.3 x 33 x 14.6 cm.)

Provenance:

Sotheby's New York, 29 March 2006, lot 207.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7605.

This dwarfish figure, in a short dhoti, richly clad in heavy jewelry, a sacred thread or *yajnopavita*, and a tall crown, is a *yaksha*. Yaksha are semi-divine nature spirits with a variety of manifestations in the Hindu context, adopted and transformed by Mahayana and Tantric Buddhists. In the context of Tantric Buddhism, from which the present example emerges, yaksha are often benevolent attendants of buddhas and bodhisattvas. The present yaksha stands on a lotus pedestal, holding a fruit or bud in his right hand and a lotus in the left. *Vidyadharas* or 'knowledge-bearers' preside over him in the clouds above, while attendants (also bearing lotuses) stand at his sides.

While exact identification of this figure is not possible, the origin of the sculpture is apparent. Gray schist steles of this size and compositional style were typical products of the Pala Empire in Northeastern India. The ties for the yaksha's diadem which billow out from rosettes behind each ear are a stylistic trope that seems to have begun with Pala sculpture. His cone-shaped crown adorned with triangular petals and a rounded finial point to its tenth- or eleventh-century date of creation.



Buddha Shakyamuni

Northeastern India, Bihar, Pala period, 11th century

Black basalt

27 x 14 1/3 x 6 1/2 in. (68.6 x 36.3 x 16.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Private New York collection, since the 1990s.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7676.

A small canopy surmounts this stele of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni donning a crown given to him by the buddhas of the ten directions. Floral motifs fill the upper third of this perfectly balanced composition: binding the beaded strands that comprise the buddha's halo, decorating each of his ears and his crown, and stylized into triangular ornaments flanking his head. Florets float on either side of a finely carved aureole which appears like a gathering of beaded garlands, naturally curved with the strands in rotation.

A bronze figure of Shakyamuni from Bihar, made in the early eleventh century, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 1987.142.319) bears a close resemblance to the present sculpture in terms of iconographic interpretation and the Buddha's physical proportions. The Sarnath-style diaphanous sanghati with a double hem and articulated undulations at either side as well as the bronze's now-missing inlaid ornaments flanking the buddha's head are patent stylistic similarities.

The present sculpture is carved in the black igneous rock of Northeastern India typically used in Pala-period stone sculpture. A close comparison of crowned Shakyamuni in a lighter gray basalt, featuring a cylindrical coronet with carved florette at the base of each crown petal, triangular floral elements on either side of the Buddha's head and billowing ribbons beneath them, can be found at The Indian Museum in Kolkata (acc. 6574). The Kolkata example, however, is seated in the earth-touching posture. This standing image of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni possesses an engaging quality that the seated image does not, as he displays the abhaya mudra or 'gesture of fearlessness' with his left hand.





Buddha Shakyamuni

Northeastern India, Pala period, 11th – 12th century

Black basalt

16 ½ x 11 ¾ x 2 ½ in. (41.9 x 29.8 x 6.4 cm.)

Provenance:

Private New York collection, since the 1990s.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7677.

This stone stele depicts Buddha Shakyamuni expressing his shared identity with Vairochana, flanked by two attendants and surrounded by many buddhas. As Shakyamuni ascends to the pureland of Akanistha upon his enlightenment, he is crowned by the buddhas of the ten directions and recognized as the *nirmanakaya* or form-body or the cosmic buddha Mahavairochana. Thus, here, he is shown donning a crown and turning the wheel of the dharma in the ultimate paradise. The historical buddha's identity is distinguished from that of the celestial buddha Vairochana only by his simple *sanghati* in lieu of the heavenly ornamentation typically worn by beings of the *sambhogakaya*. While the Buddha's three-pointed crown is referenced in Mahayana sutras, the manner in which it is executed in stone, the arch just above and the niche it surmounts, as well as the beaded edge of the stele, point to the Vajrayana context and Pala origin of this devotional work of art.



Crowned Buddha

Thailand, Khmer period, Lopburi, 13th century

Copper alloy

22 in. (55.9 cm.) high

Provenance:

The collection of Mrs. Julian B. Herrmann, acquired in the 1920s or 30s.

Thence by descent.

While the origins of the crowned buddha image in Southeast Asia are unknown, it is likely that this serene figure represents the historical buddha donning the crowns and jewels of a royal. The figure displays the *vitarkamudra* with both hands, indicating that he is in discussion or transmitting Buddhist teachings.

The present figure of Buddha Shakyamuni is a product of the ancient Mon city of Lopburi during the Khmer period of Cambodian rule. The square face and full lips give the face of the present figure a likeness to the last phase of Khmer art of the Angkor period, which centers around the art produced for the Temple of Bayon. Native Thai Dvaravati influences are also apparent in the sculpture's frontality and balance.

A twelfth-century bronze figure of the Buddha at the Asian Museum of Art San Francisco (acc. 2006.27.20)—which displays a conical crown, a necklace with floral pendants, highly-positioned arm bands, a jeweled belt with ornaments hanging from its lower band, as well as an overall symmetrical design—is attributed to either Thailand or Cambodia. Comparison to a seated bronze figure of Buddha attributed to the twelfth or thirteenth century provincial Khmer capital of Lopburi at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (acc. 2019.451), however, provides more conclusive evidence that the present figure originated in the ancient Khmer dominion of Lopburi, in what is now Thailand.



Ganesha

Cambodia, Khmer, 12th-13th century

Bronze

2 ½ in. (6.4 cm.) high (excluding base)

Provenance:

Arts of Asia, Bangkok, before 1971.

Private collection of a Siam University professor, acquired from the above.

The Khmer Empire, which flourished from the ninth to the fifteenth centuries, dominated much of Southeast Asia. Its capital, Angkor, nurtured unparalleled achievements in sculpture and architecture. Located in northwest Cambodia, the city experienced cultural crosscurrents from China and India which had a lasting impact on the development of the empire. Sanskrit functioned as the literary language of the court, while Hindu and Buddhist traditions were honored and patronized through artistic production. Although discussion of Khmer sculpture often revolves around stone temples, bronze sculpture played an important role in the empire's rich artistic tradition as well. Bronze is a noble material representative of success and prosperity.

The present sculpture depicts the Hindu god Ganesha, elephant-headed son of Shiva, seated on a rectangular plinth executed in the round, his divine power emanating in all directions. The deity wears a *sampot* with butterfly sash at the reverse and is adorned with armbands, necklace, and a conical headdress. The ornamentation is characteristic of sculptures from this period; see the style expressed in another example at the Minneapolis Institute of Art for reference (acc. 99.216.11). Although some refinement of the present Ganesha's detail has been lost overtime, the elegance of this product of labor-intensive bronze artistry remains.



King Ralpachen

Tibet, late 17th century

Distemper on cloth

20 x 12 in. (52 x 31 cm.)

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 8078.

The king is depicted here with a slightly furrowed brow and an otherwise serene expression, with soft eyes that draw the viewer in. Discrete strands of hair billow upward, filling the lower portion of his aureole and conveying the energy of his practice. He holds a *vajra* and bell pointing to his shared identity with the bodhisattva Vajrapani. The enlightened figure, however, dons garments that match his earthly and royal status: flaming jewels, billowing sashes, and a large kirtimukha belt buckle decorate layers of gold-embroidered garments, each distinguished with a unique floral design. The figure depicted beside the large bowl of jewels before the king is likely a minister waiting to relay a message.

The present painting is a rare depiction of King Ralpachen, as he is typically pictured with Songtsen Gampo and Trisong Detsen, who as a triad comprise the “Three Dharma Kings.” Under King Ralpachen (r.815-839), the forty-first king of Tibet, the Tibetan Empire reached its greatest expanse. Creating artworks such as the present, honoring Tibetan royalty of the past, became a popular practice under the period of consolidation under the Ganden Phodrang in the seventeenth century.



Arhat Nagasena

Tibet, 18th century

Distemper on cloth

26 ½ x 18 in. (67.5 x 46 cm.)

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 88590.

Aged and dignified, the disproportionately large figure at the center of this composition depicts an Indian Buddhist master called Nagasena. He is one of sixteen *arhats* who have pledged to remain on earth until the future buddha, Maitreya, appears. His life story is similar to that of Siddhartha's in that he was born into a royal family and gave up his kingdom to become a Buddhist monk. Thereafter he gained esteem through sage advice he offered to King Milinda of second-century northwestern India. The vase and mendicant staff Nagasena holds distinguish his character from the other *arhats* that would accompany him in the larger set to which this painting belongs. He appears in a shirt, multi-colored robes, and boots, as prescribed by artists of the Chinese Tang dynasty who created the first models for such figures.

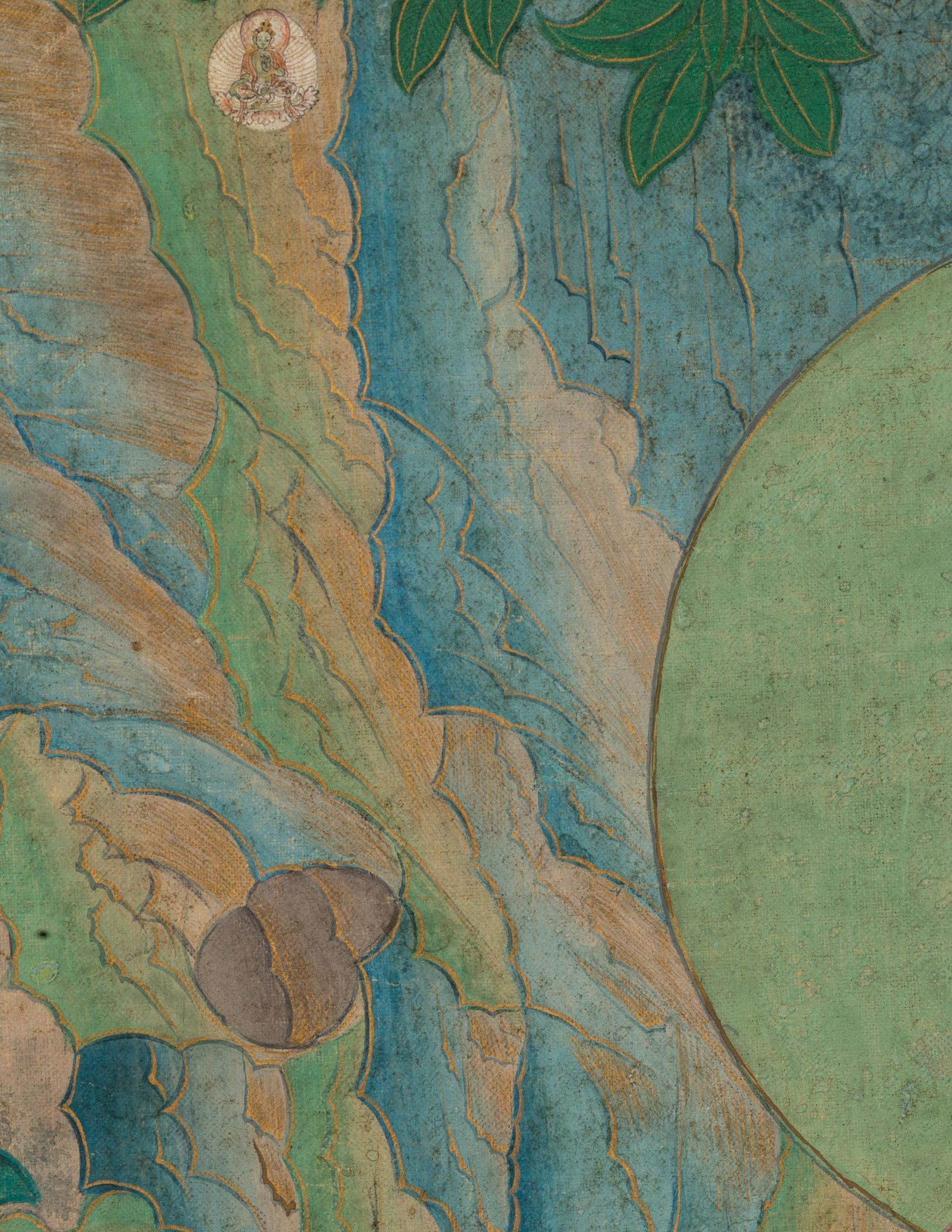
Nagasena appears enthroned atop a rock formation attended by a female figure offering jewels, a monk displaying the *dharmachakra* mudra, and an Indian mendicant with a precious offering. A very small apparition of Green Tara is depicted in a small radiating aureole, embedded within the craggy rocks behind the elder. These rock formations are one of many features within the present work which demonstrate great Chinese influence resulting from the historical practice of exchanging paintings between China and Tibet. Others include the aforementioned garments, the prominence and stylization of flowers, and lack of sky typically given great breadth in Tibetan paintings.

A lengthy inscription along the lower edge of the composition has been identified as one excerpted from praises to the Sixteen Great Elders written by the fifth Dalai Lama Ngagwang Lobzang Gyatso (see himalayanart.org):

"The vase of Nagasena was offered along with many other precious vessels by the Four Guardian Kings in order to receive refuge in the Three Jewels and to benefit all beings. The divine [water] of the vase will cleanse karmic obscurations. Whoever hears the sound of the staff will be cleaned of all sickness, freed from all suffering and the afflictions will be pacified, and [all will] obtain faith in the Three Jewels."

(translation by Jeff Watt)







Five-pointed Spear

Tibet, 17th-18th century

29 1/8 in. (74 cm.) long

Provenance:

Jean Claude Moreau-Gobard.

The Andrault Collection.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7653.

This five-pointed spear has stylized prongs that blaze with gilded scrolling flames, complementing the gilded skull set in its base. As a weapon in the hands of wrathful deities, the trident symbolizes, among other things, the destruction of the three poisons that drive suffering in *samsara*: ignorance, greed, and hatred. Trident banners are often used to decorate the roofs of protector chapels dedicated to such wrathful deities.

The present spear with its five points, though symbolically synonymous with the trident, *trisula*, or *mdung-rtse-gsum*, most closely resembles that which accompanies an image of the state oracle of Tibet known as Nechung Chokyong or 'Religious Protector of a Small Dwelling [a monastery]' in the great collection of the Potala Palace in Lhasa.

This Nechung Chokyong incarnation lineage has held great sway over the Ganden Phodrang since the seventeenth century and the ritual investiture of this figure—who has the power to transcend his human body and embody a protective retinue figure of Pehar Gyalpo installed as an important protector by the Fifth Dalai Lama and his minister—includes the present five-pointed spear.

The present ritual object is certainly rare. However, a nearly identical trident resides within the Musée Guimet in Paris (acc. M15918).



Konchog Bang

Tibet, 18th century

Ground mineral pigments on cloth

28 ¼ x 19 in. (72 x 48 cm.)

Provenance:

Private UK collection.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 88593.

An important text narrated by the great Indian pandit Atisha explicating the essential practices of the early Kadam tradition of Tibetan Buddhism describes Konchog Bang as an Indian prince. Therein, Atisha describes his foremost disciple as an incarnation of the Great Compassionate One, Avalokiteshvara, and Kongchog Bang's story is one of his previous lives.

After refusing to marry the wife his father selected for him, prince Kongchog Bang encounters a Buddhist saint in the sky before him who advises him to go to the land of Uddiyana where he will find the *dakini* Sangwa Yeshe and bring her home as his betrothed. After a treacherous journey riddled with demons he must battle he finds the *dakini* in the company of Guru Vimala and thousands of other *dakini*. There, he learns he will be reincarnated as Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo and Sangwa Yeshe will take the form of his Chinese wife.

The Secret Wisdom *dakini* (labeled 'Sangwa Yeshe' in Tibetan) floats in the upper right corner of the composition and Guru Vimala (labeled 'Lama Dri-ma-med') floats in the upper left holding a vajra and a bell. An inscription in Tibetan Ume script on the back of the painting makes reference to both figures:

*By the compassionate moon rays of Vimala Guru and
Guhya Jnana,
Nurturing the lily garden,
Ripening the beings of the land of Uddiyana;
To the One Lord Konchog Bang I pray!*

(translation by Jeff Watt)

The present painting comes from a well-known thirteen-painting compositional design representing Dalai Lamas and their pre-incarnations. The original designs took the form of woodblock images which were likely created at Narthang, where the thirteenth century *Kadam Legbam* (the aforementioned source of Konchog Bang's identity), which began as an oral teaching, was recorded by the ninth abbot Khenchen Nyima Gyeltsen (1225-1305). However, this painting is not only a display of that standard iconography, but of the careful hand of a seasoned thangka painter whose skill is apparent.

Compare the present painting to a nineteenth-century iteration of this composition in the Rubin Museum of Art (acc. C2006.66.332), which lacks the nuances of color and the capturing clouds displayed in the present composition.



Arhat Kanakavatsa

Tibet, 18th century

Ground mineral pigments on cloth

36 ¼ x 24 in. (92 x 61 cm.)

Provenance:

Koller Zurich, June 1978, lot 46.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 36292.

The Sixteen Arhats emerge out of an early Sanskrit Buddhist text called the *Nandamitra* describing enlightened human disciples of the historical Buddha Shakyamuni who vow to remain on earth until the future buddha, Maitreya, arrives. The present aesthetic form, however, is the result of earlier Chinese models of these figures referred to as 'luohan' (the Chinese equivalent of the Sanskrit term 'arhat'). Tibetans, however, refer to many of these figures as *neten* (Tib. Wylie: gnas brten) which equates to the Sanskrit term for elder (*sthavira*). Arhatship is a level of buddhist attainment for which Tibetans use the word *drachompa* (Tib. Wylie: dgra bcom pa). The difference in such terms, therefore, leaves in question what status Tibetan Buddhists attribute to some of these figures Western art historians describe as "arhats." The present figure Kanakavatsa and the other fifteen arhats are, nevertheless, very significant figures in Tibetan Buddhist art.

Here, Kanakavatsa is depicted wide-eyed, holding a jeweled lasso given to him by the protectors of the Tantras known as nagas. He is barefoot, seated atop a meditation cushion, and attended by a small male figure holding a vase. Two large jewels are suspended in the water at the foreground. The present painting belongs to a painting set depicting either sixteen or eighteen figures which includes Arhat Nagasena and Arhat Bakula from this catalogue as well as two others in private collections (see Himalayan Art Resources items no. 21658 and 24114). The set is distinguished by the golden bodies of each elder, the elaborate and distinct golden patterns of each vibrant textile, the rainbow of colors among clouds filling the bright blue skies, the pure white moon and orange sun, and the red cartouches with small gold inscriptions of homage.



Arhat Bakula

Tibet, 18th century

Distemper on cloth

36 x 24 in. (92 x 60 cm.)

Provenance:

Private European collection; acquired from Galerie Koller, Zurich, 1980s.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 36293.

The *arhat* Bakula was born prior to the historical buddha and achieved enlightenment only eight days after joining the original *sangha*. Thus, he is praised like a *bodhisattva* capable of bestowing material needs on those who seek dharma. He is depicted here according to a twelfth- or thirteenth-century Tibetan set of praises written by Kashmiri teacher Shakyashri Bhadra: as an ordained monk seated on an animal skin, holding a mongoose spitting jewels. His old age is conveyed by somewhat hyperbolic wrinkles and white hair and brows, which spill off the monk's furrowed temples. Below his grand throne topped with a flaming jewel and *kirtimukha*, a Buddhist mendicant offers the honorable Bakula a coral branch and an auspicious blue dragon appears among clouds and water that coalesce with his curling body.

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Arhat Nagasena

Tibet, 18th century

Distemper on cloth

35 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (91 x 60 cm.)

Provenance:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 36291.

Arhat Nagasena was a direct disciple of the historical Buddha and having swiftly attained enlightenment, became an exemplar among other figures within equally outstanding aptitude known as 'worthy ones' in ancient India. Nagasena is depicted here with his mendicant staff in the shape of two stupas in his right hand and a vase emitting rainbow light streaming upward into the mountain peaks behind him in his left. His bright white, focused eyes appear as if they are drawing the multi-colored rays of transcendent wisdom out of the vase with his gaze. Multiple grottos, where adepts may be found meditating, appear in the complex landscape where he dwells.

The present painting belongs to a painting set depicting either sixteen or eighteen figures which includes Arhat Kanakavatsa and Arhat Bakula from this catalogue as well as two others in private collections (see Himalayan Art Resources items no. 21658 and 24114). The set is distinguished by the golden bodies of each elder, the elaborate and distinct golden patterns of each vibrant textile, the rainbow of colors among clouds filling the bright blue skies, the pure white moon and orange sun, and the red cartouches with small gold inscriptions of homage.



Bodhisattva

Nepal, early Malla Period, 14th century

Inlaid gilt-copper

8 ½ in. (21.5 cm.) high

Provenance:

Private European collection, acquired by inheritance.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 7612.



Downcast eyes and slightly upturned lips convey the spiritual equipoise of this benevolent buddhist being. The figure wears all of the garments of a *bodhisattva*: a crown, necklaces, bracelets, a sacred cord, a festooned belt around a floral *dhoti*, and anklets. This heavenly manifestation is known as a *sambhogakaya* (Skt.) appearance. In English, this Tantric Buddhist class of beings are referred to as ‘enjoyment bodies.’ The *sambhogakaya* is a realm one gains access to through the highest dimensions of practice; it is where all bodhisattvas reside. *Sambhogakaya* manifestations are considered one of the primary means through which buddhist truths are made manifest to human beings. Buddhas often take on this appearance to teach highly realized practitioners and bodhisattvas.

The five celestial buddhas are, therefore, depicted in *sambhogakaya* or “*bodhisattva* appearance” with great frequency. Thus, without a view of the present sculpture’s equally-detailed backside, the meditative posture and fear-dispelling gesture (or *abhaya mudra*) might lead one to identify the peaceful deity as the buddha Amoghasiddhi of the North. However, a protruding piece of metal on the back of the figure’s proper-left arm indicates that there was once a lotus stalk here, which would have supported another iconographic element essential to identification of the figure. Without this element present, the figure must be described as an unidentifiable bodhisattva. Yet, the origin of this figure is apparent.

The elaborate five-petaled diadem and tiered helmet with a *vajra* finial are immediately telling of this fine bronze’s Nepalese origin. The style is common to Nepalese sculptures and mirrors worn by Vajrayana Buddhist *acharyas* or priests in the Kathmandu Valley. The inlaying of translucent semi-precious stones beside the turquoise and lapis, which give color to the bodhisattva’s heavenly jewels, is also much more common in Nepal than Tibet. This finely cast, richly-gilded bodhisattva clearly displays the naturalistic physiognomy, typical aquiline nose, and precise decoration mastered by the Newar artists of the Kathmandu Valley during the early Malla period. A fifteenth-century figure of Manjushri or Maitreya at the Rubin Museum of Art provides a close comparison (Acc. C2003.33.2; see Himalayan Art Resources, item no. 65255). This figure, too, is clearly missing an iconographic element that would have emerged from a lotus stalk attached to the back of the proper-left arm.

Also see a comparable sculpture, identified as Amoghasiddhi, sold at Christie’s New York (19 March 2013, lot 404). It is quite possible that these figures were part of the same set of sculptures depicting the Eight Great Bodhisattvas.



Vajrapani

China, 18th century

Distemper on cloth

43 ¼ x 28 ½ in. (109.8 x 72.5 cm.)

Provenance:

Private Swedish collection; acquired in the late 1930s.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 8076.

A parasol surmounted with flaming jewels and symmetrically framed by five cumulus clouds, hovers over an elaborate throne back presided over by a *garuda* and containing the Six Ornaments—an elephant, a lion, a sarabha, a dwarf, a *makara*, and a *naga*—on each side. Within the bounds of these stacked creatures, black transforms into a deep blue, and finally into a rainbow of light, radiating from the core of the bodhisattva's golden body in an undulating aureole. A halo of pink and green light frames the bodhisattva's serene expression. The ornaments that indicate his enlightened status are particularly elaborate—decorated with both jewels and delicate lotus flowers throughout. His multi-layered *dhoti* is equally as opulent, detailed with delicate floral and spiral motifs in gold.

The golden tone of this majestic figure's skin belies his identity as the bodhisattva Vajrapani, as the deity is more typically depicted in blue or green. In the Vajrayana tradition Vajrapani takes the place of a narrator, relaying Tantric Buddhist teachings. He appropriately holds a *vajra* and *ghanta* which, together, embody his perfected state. The foreground below the celestial figure is filled with large lotus flowers supporting the Eight Auspicious Symbols of Tibetan Buddhism: a parasol, a vase, an endless knot, a dharma wheel, two fish, a victory banner, a conch shell, and a lotus flower.

The style employed here is associated with the Manchu Qing imperial court, produced under a series of emperors who considered themselves emanations of the buddha Manjushri. The relationship between hierarchs of the Gelugpa sect that presided over the central Tibetan government and the Qing Emperors followed the priest-patron model established by Kublai Khan and Chogyal Phakpa in the thirteenth century. As such, paintings like the present, were commissioned to fill Tibetan Buddhist temples utilized by the court. The style is distinguished most apparently by the offering goddesses that appear within the clouds at the top of the composition as well as the abundance of lush lotuses styled as peonies and chrysanthemums.

Compare the present painting to those associated with the eighteenth-century Xumi Fushou temple, erected by the Qianlong Emperor as a replica of Tashi Lhunpo monastery for the visit of the sixth Panchen Lama, such as that of Samantabhadra in the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (acc. B72D67). While the compositional arrangement is quite similar in style, the multi-colored saw-tooth edge clouds in the present work, as well as the ornamented trees in the forefront, and the small deer hidden in the landscape to the bodhisattva's right, point to a more explicit influence of the contemporaneous central Tibetan styles on the present work of art.







Green Tara (Syamatara)**Tibet, 14th century***Gilt-bronze with semi-precious inlaid stones**18 in. (47.7 cm.) high***Provenance:**

Estate of Roy Kirk, San Francisco, acquired in Asia, 1960s, by repute.
J. Russell Wheritt Trust, purchased from the above, 1990s.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 2144.









The goddess imbued within this image is Green Tara who patronized Tibet directly and was endowed by Tibetans with the epithets, iconography, and functions of enlightened male buddhas and bodhisattvas. Green Tara is second only to the Buddha for many Tibetan Buddhists. A great deal of laity know the praises of her twenty-one forms by heart, just as well as the monks. Syamatara's Tibetan name 'Jetsun Drolma,' which means 'Venerable Mother of Liberation,' points to that for which she is supplicated for—she can swiftly remove obstacles.

The present image of Green Tara depicts her in a form derived from early Indian sources, yet clearly Tibetanized. The goddess is depicted in a way that originated in the *Taramulakalpa*, composed in the seventh century in India and transported to Tibet: she is a youthful female seated in the position of royal ease on a lotus throne with her right hand lowered in a boon-granting gesture and her left raised in a teaching gesture, a perfectly symmetrical figure, adorned with the thirty-two marks of perfection, with a serene expression and a high chignon with tresses of hair falling down on both shoulders.

Despite the formulaic iconography behind this efficacious ritual work of art, the lost-wax process employed to create this sculpture ensures that this important commission is entirely unique. The origin and date of this richly-gilded bronze figure of Green Tara is made identifiable by stylistic features such as her rectangular *urna*, aquiline nose, prominent chin, soft pursed lips, tubular limbs, pinched waist, and floral ornamentation in both jewelry and incised patterns. All reveal the influence of a sculptural style created by the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley—the Newars.



The present masterwork exhibits a Nepalese style developed for Tibetan patrons in central Tibet. Previously, the present sculpture was appropriately likened to murals of the Five Tathagatas in the South Chapel of Shalu monastery (just south of Shigatse), painted in the second quarter of the fourteenth century. The crown in particular can be found in the Belri or Nepalese style painting tradition that flourished in Tibet, epitomized by the fifteenth-century Gyantse Kumbum murals of Tsang Province (south-central Tibet). Prominent west-central Tibetan monasteries of the time, such as Shalu, Gyantse, Ngor, and Sakya, were particularly active in reinterpreting and perpetuating traditions associated with the Indo-Nepalese artistic styles imported from Nepal during the second dissemination of Buddhism. It is possible that the present sculpture, given its magnificent quality and size, was created for such a context. This large and beautiful figure of Green Tara is, admittedly, more pleasing in proportion, countenance, and ornamentation than a comparable gilt-bronze figure of Tara held in the aforementioned and important Shalu monastery (see U. von Schroeder, *Buddhist Sculptures in Tibet*, 2001, p. 967, no. 233B). It is an undeniable masterwork of art.



Hevajra

Central Tibet, 17th century

Distemper on cloth

38 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 28 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (98.6 x 72.8 cm.)

Provenance:

The Bortolot Collection, acquired in New York, September 1984.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 36291.

Hevajra, whose name is perhaps best understood in English as “Oh, Vajra!” is the tantric manifestation of the Buddha Akshobhya (the ‘Immovable One’). His name epitomizes the adamant nature of Vajrayana teachings. Here, the skull-cup-bearing form of tutelary deity Hevajra stands in *pratyaldhasana* with his consort Nairatmya. The deities of the highest yoga tantra dance atop a double-lotus trampling Vishnu, Indra, Shiva, and Brahma in their stride. The eight-headed, sixteen-armed Hevajra clasps skull cups holding a variety of beings in each hand; an elephant and the earth-goddess Prithvi in his primary hands. His proper-right hands hold a variety of animals while his proper-left hold a retinue of other Hindu deities. While it is often difficult to differentiate the animals when this tantric deity is represented in sculptural form, this painted image depicts each animal distinctly and charmingly.

The lineage descending from the primordial buddha Vajradhara (in blue at the top center of the composition) is accordingly that of multiple Kagyu traditions that emerged after the lifetime of one of Marpa’s four principle disciple’s named Ngogton Choku Dorje(1036-1097), accredited with the transmission of the Hevajra teachings that gave birth to this image. Descending down each side of the composition are the Eight Offering Goddesses described in the Hevajra *sadhana* (or meditation script). At the bottom of the composition there are three forms of Hevajra representing body, speech and mind (from left to right, respectively).

The symmetrical style of the composition conforms to an interpretation of the classic Menri style as practiced by Khyentse Chenmo (b. 1420s) of Gongkar Chode monastery and the Karma Kagyu tradition. The style, thus known as “Khyenri,” is marked by a bright palette, great attention to small detail, portrait-like faces, and varied modes of fiery nimbuses and halos surrounding each figure.







Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini

Nepal, 15th-16th century

Gilt copper

8 ½ in. (22 cm.) high

Provenance:

Henri and Dolores Kamer, New York.

Private American collection, acquired from the above in the early 1990s.

Published:

Himalayan Art Resources (himalayanart.org), item no. 16809.





Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini are important deities of the highest class of yogic practice in Vajrayana Buddhism. This small gilt-bronze sculpture of meditational deities in union exudes an energy that reaches far beyond the boundaries of its surface. Chakrasamvara is depicted here according to Tibetan Buddhist convention, with four faces and twelve hands, in *alidhasana*, embraced by his consort Vajrayogini. Together they trample the deities Bhairava (who lies prostrate) and Kalaratri (who lies supine). The multi-headed tutelary deity holds various attributes with his many arms radiating around him, the principle arms holding a vajra and bell and the uppermost holding the ends of a tiger skin which he drapes over his back.

This lustrous gilt-bronze sculpture is representative of the highest quality Nepalese craftsmanship. Its magnificence is embedded not only in the semi-precious inset ornaments that adorn the deities gleaming golden, perfectly proportioned bodies, but perhaps more so in the sweetness of the countenances and the apparent meeting of the male and female manifestation's gazes—the intangible, yet most-human feature of this sculpture.

Compare the present sculpture to a fourteenth-century sculpture of Chakrasamvara in union with Vajrayogini from Central Tibet at the Rubin Museum of Art (acc. C2005.16.16) which has repeatedly been attributed to the hand of a Nepalese artist in exhibitions and publications (see *Collection Highlights: The Rubin Museum of Art*, New York, 2014, p. 106). The Rubin sculpture appears to have been crafted in Tibet for a number of reasons including the appearance of the metal alloy beneath the gilding and the fixtures revealed on the backside of the figure and base which indicate that it



would have been mounted on a larger structure, likely a *tashi gomang* or a stupa of 'many auspicious doors.' The similarities between the present sculpture and the Rubin example, in terms of craftsmanship and style are significant as the Rubin sculpture more directly evidences the significant relationship between Nepalese craftsmanship and Tibetan Buddhist worship.

Newar craftsmen made Vajrayana buddhist figures such as the present for both Nepalese and Tibetan patrons in both Nepal and Tibet. However, the unfinished backside of the present figure's lotus base and the remnants of red pigment thereon are telltale signs of a geographical Nepalese provenance. The modeling of the lotus petals and red pigment applied to the back of the base can be observed on a stylistically similar sculpture of Sahaja Chakrasamvara at the British Museum (acc. 1921,0219.1) attributed to the sixteenth century and acquired directly from Nepal. The present bronze group, however, is far more complex and impressive.









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